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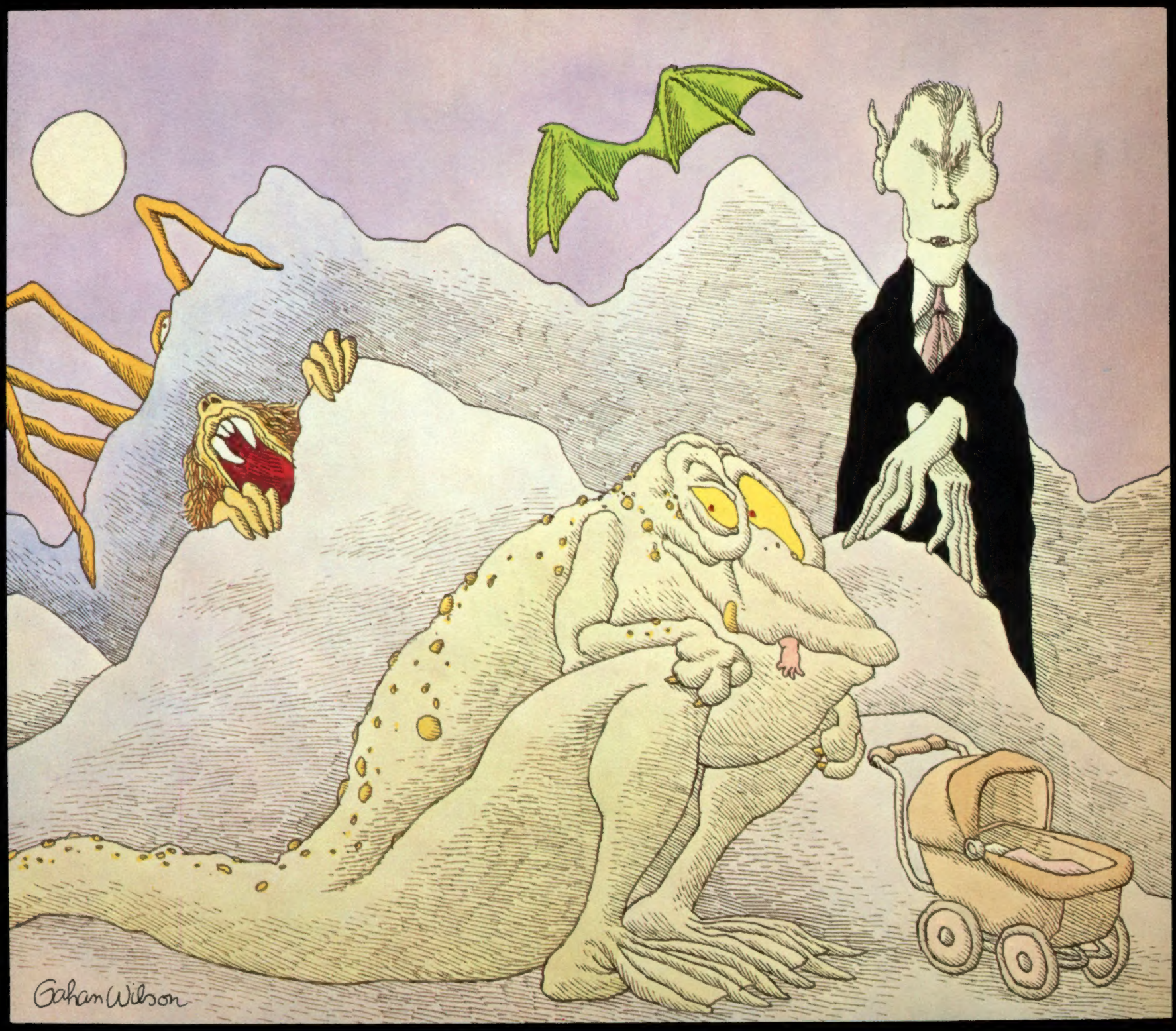
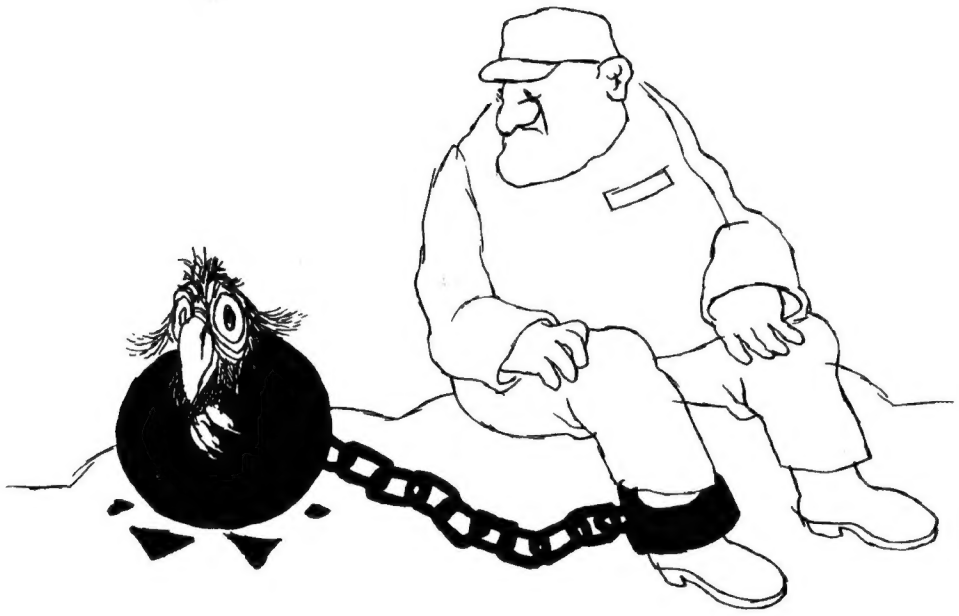
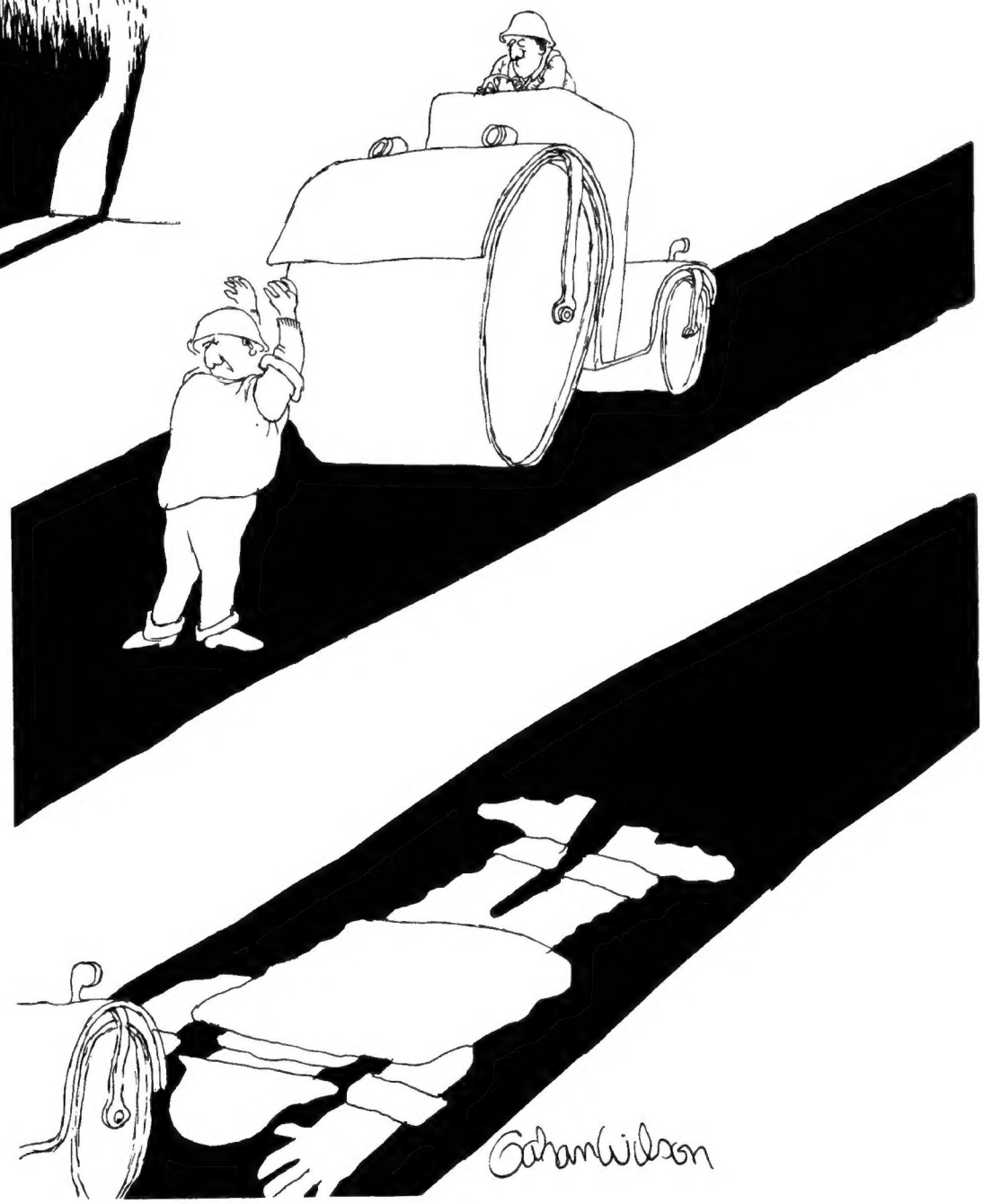


IN THIS ISSUE: INTERVIEWS WITH

Gahan Wilson & Harry Harrison





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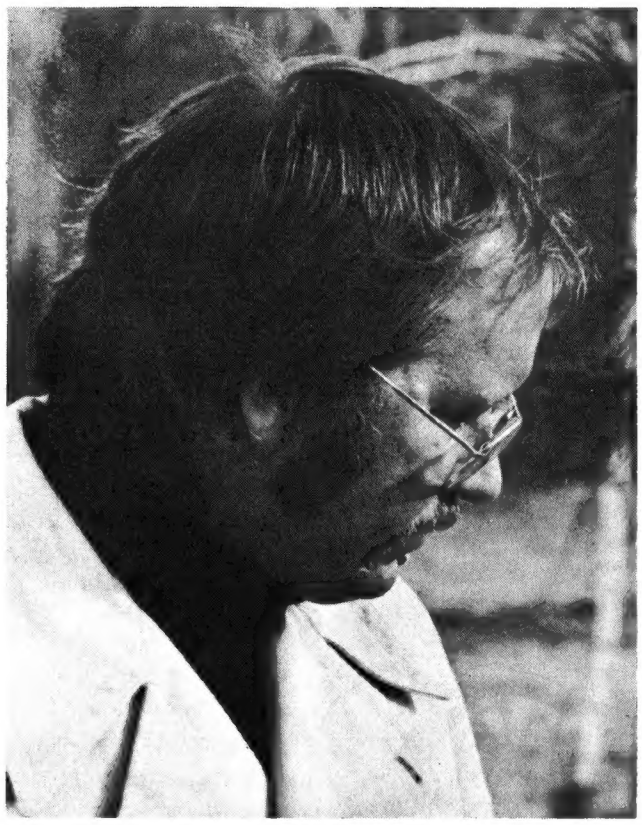
Back cover color and separations by D. Bruce Berry.

". . . but, seriously. . . ."



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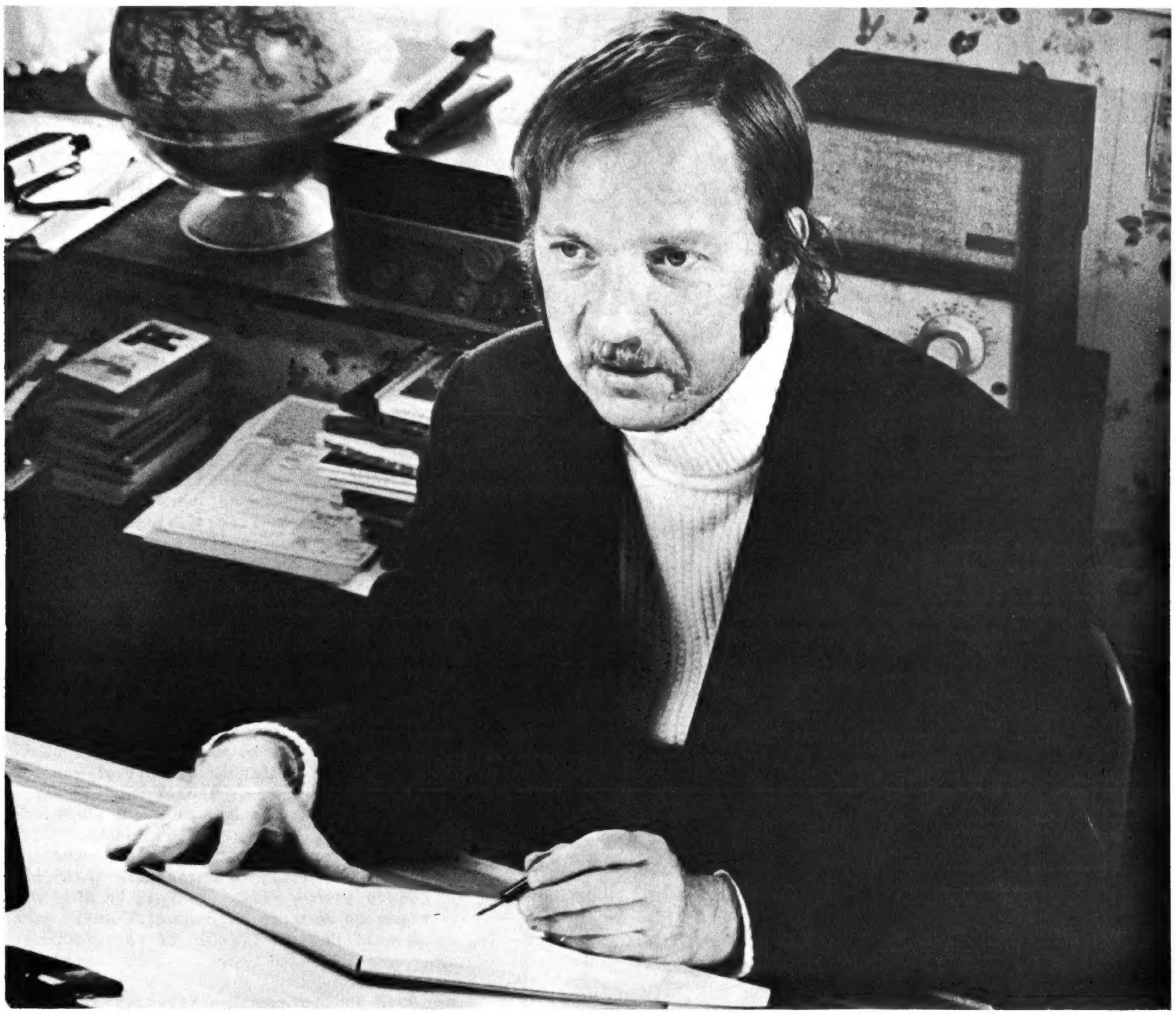


Graphic Story Magazine Interview:

Gahan Wilson

Some of the freakiest and wildly funniest cartoons around today emanate from the transplanted brain of PLAYBOY's mirthful master of the macabre, Gahan Wilson. Since the mid-fifties Wilson has been a professional magazine cartoonist, working first for the now - defunct COLLIER'S and later becoming a PLAYBOY regular. His subtle gag ideas, often satirically supernatural, are a lot farther out than the average cartoonist's, and his gift for illustrating the grotesque comically is matched by very few. Wilson cartoons are drawn with care in a distinctive fine-line style populated with all sorts of things that go bump in the night. He is a master at capturing priceless facial expressions and in dreaming up absurd situations for his fiendish characters.

Gahan Wilson's childhood was spent in the midwest, but the memory of his birth escapes him: "It was somewhere around the mid-1700s but I am a little vague on the early details as I underwent several serious modifications as I fell into the hands of this or that experimenter." As a boy he read minds at parties for pay, but "I gave it up because they believed it so easily it got a little scary." Numbered among Wilson's ancestors are P. T. Barnum and William Jennings Bryan, and his father was the man who invented the steel venetian blind.

Today Wilson lives in Boston, Massachusetts with his very pretty wife Nancy, who writes under the name of Nancy Winters and sells to various magazines including COSMOPOLITAN, and two stepsons. He has a fondness for walking, likes to cook Chinese food, and his favorite city is London. There are four cartoon books to his credit (one of which is dedicated "To Whom It May Concern") and he is currently contributing prolifically to PLAYBOY, NATIONAL LAMPOON and THE MAGAZINE OF FANTASY & SCIENCE FICTION.

The following interview was conducted by mail in March of 1972, and the ghoulishly delightful cover painting of assorted Wilson monsters was done especially for this number of GRAPHIC STORY MAGAZINE.

-- Dick Voll

You knew this would be asked, so please don't be too disappointed -- what is your ghoul in life?

I didn't know that would be asked and I refuse to answer it without the advice of my lawyer.

Does your birthday happen to fall on Halloween?

My birthday falls on February the 18th, which is the birthday of Helen Gurley Brown. Honest. My wife does articles for COSMOPOLITAN and happened to mention the editors of the NATIONAL LAMPOON gave me a surprise cake after a business lunch, and the whole thing came out. I don't know if that proves astrology's been right all along or destroys it.

The March 1959 "Playbill" states "Wilson recently discovered a comic strip he drew soon after infancy: 'It had scrawls in the balloons instead of words, which gives you some idea how early I started.'" What sort of strip was this, and how did your style develop in your early years?

It was a Basil Wolverton type strip, come to think of it, with space monsters and men in bulky space suits and ray guns and the whole business. My style changed and altered as I fell in love with the work of this or that artist and as I attempted to absorb their insights into my own.

Where did you get your schooling in art?

I went to a commercial school in Chicago for a couple of summers, then decided they didn't teach profoundly enough, so I went to the Art Institute of Chicago and graduated after four years, taking their fine arts course. It was an excellent place with many different teachers touting their different outlooks. They also had a fine department of graphics which gave me invaluable hints.

Did you do much reading of comic books in your younger days, and did the material in them bend your youthful mind?

Oh, Lord, yes. My idea of heaven was to go to the Evanshire Drug Store, station myself on the marble bar of their soda fountain next to the comic book rack right next to the bar -- and slowly sip a chocolate peppermint soda while reading those comic books free, one after the other. Nobody ever stopped me. Maybe people *were* nicer back then. The material first bent my mind into a kind of elipse which then bent again into a sidewise figure eight, which I understand is the symbol for eternity.

Were there any artists in the field whose work you especially liked in the forties and fifties?

I tended to favor those who drew odder styles such as Wolverton and Dick Briefer, but I remember I also liked the precise, clean way the early Captain Marvels were done. I loved Jack Cole's Plastic Man and the way he handled the strip. Then, as time went by, I admired the NEW YORKER people, and it's interesting that all the ones I liked the best in that group have deteriorated badly except for Steig and Steinberg who, especially Steinberg, continue to get wider and subtler all the time. Gluyas Williams was a favorite of mine, very gentle and, at the same time, not missing one unbuttoned button or wattle. Then I dearly loved the illustrations of Lynd Ward and the German expressionists and those wild Mexican woodcuts of Zapata types as skeletons and so on and on. There was a serious kind of marionette theater back then with an approach to the human figure and face which I remember fascinated me. Really the richness of the things around to study and learn from is fantastic. I could go on and on and on.

What is your favorite bad dream?

I think the bad dream I recall the clearest was one induced when they put me under with ether to cut out my tonsils, doubtless unnecessarily. I went on a terrifying ride on a kind of animated cartoon rocket ship with animated stars and planets whizzing by. The colors were brilliant and the sense of wild, spinning motion was extraordinary. These days one would call it a trip. Those days, too.

Where did your first cartoon appear in print?

In the company magazine of the outfit my father worked for as one of their vice-presidents. The company's name was, believe it or not, Acme Steel, and it had, for a trade symbol, a sort of gooneybird-looking man made up out of strip steel. The cartoon, firmly political in nature, showed this gooneybird man shoveling heaps of steel on Tojo and Adolf Hitler, who were being crushed. Horribly.

Have you been influenced by many artists throughout your career in either drawing techniques or concepts of humor?

Many, as stated above. And with humor of course it extends into all kinds of written stuff -- Twain, Tarkington, Benchley, Thurber, Swift, Gogol, Bierce, Poe (he had a very wild sense of humor), and on and on.

That 1959 PLAYBOY also mentioned that you subscribe to Max Eastman's definition o f humor, "Something grotesque approached in a mood of play." Can you elaborate on that with some of your own thoughts?

Well, Eastman gives a good example, namely that of playing with a baby. If it knows you and loves you and you play with it gently and get it giggling and then toss it in the air and catch it, the baby loves it, thinks it's the greatest thing in the world. If you come suddenly into the room, though, wearing a black cape and a slouch hat, then snatch the kid up and give it a toss, you'll give it a trauma from which it will probably never recover. The act itself, the tossing of the baby, is the same, but the approach and setting of the mood make the effect of the act entirely different. Humor is usually about something unsatisfactory happening to someone, ranging from slipping on a banana peel to realizing suddenly one is about to die, but instead of approaching it grimly, hanging on to dignity, humor plays with it and it becomes anything from droll to hilariously funny. It's really quite a phenomenon.

Do you enjoy seriously macabre art and literature, or only when it can be satirized or made amusing?

I most decidedly enjoy seriously macabre art and literature. Yes indeedy.

What horror character appeals to you the most?

I really don't have a favorite as each of the classic types makes its own statement so well. They are all outsiders. Some of them forced into it, some of them by choice. Some enjoy it, some loathe it. Poor old Lon Chaney Jr. slowly flickering into being a werewolf makes one point, Bela Lugosi grinning delightedly at the pretty girl's neck makes another. I will say a little Godzilla goes a very long way with me, however.

What do you feel are the best efforts in the history of the horror film?

That would probably be some of the really stylish, slow - paced stuff of the thirties, some of the Val Lewton forties films and the works which were working that line of territory, quite a few of the early Hammer films. And then a number of odd pop-ups such as THE THING, PSYCHO, etc. But I wouldn't be at all honest if I didn't admit I can sit smiling happily through some of the most God-awful crap.

Did you consider a career in animation or in the production of live action films?

Yes, and so far I've only done a tiny bit of tv advertising animation design. But I would love to have a chance to get involved in that sort of thing.

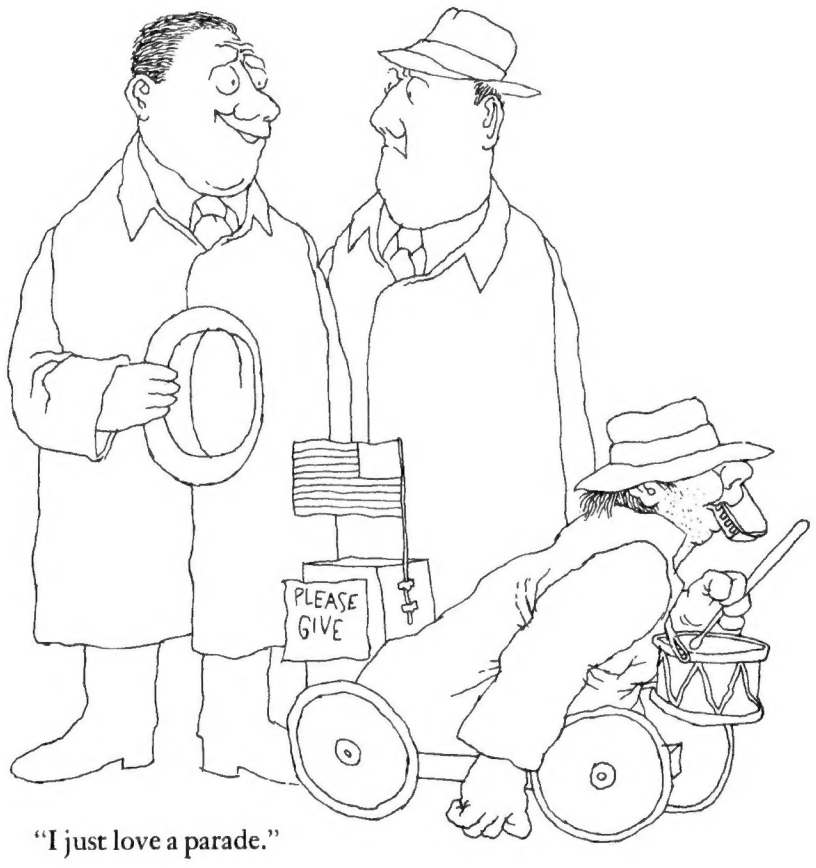
Do you draw fiendish or gruesome characters as stark as you wish, or do you tone them down to prevent sensitive readers, if any, from being upset?

There really isn't a question of that because, basically, when I'm doing a cartoon I'm trying to be funny, that's the whole point of the thing, and if I made the situation actually terrifying I'd have blown the gag. Not that I'm not out to give them a shock sometimes, mind, but the end result of the shock -- outside of, hopefully, a little thoughtful reflection -- has to be a laugh or I'm a poor cartoonist.

Do editors ever ask you to ease up on the ghastly element?

No. If they're the sort who would they don't like my work, or at least don't think it suitable for their market, and so don't buy it

"That's what he's smoking, alright!"



"I just love a parade."

in the first place. I do some illustration for children's books -- and have presently sold one which I'm in the process of writing -- and now and then an editor does show a little nervousness. But they relax when they see I'm not going to smear blood all over the place.

Do you like to draw bugs?

If I find them physically attractive.

Do you consider Charles Addams a direct influence?

Of course. I loved his work. I am very sorry he's taken his present tack, though. That tight, primitive style he used to have, with the clenched, little hands and the nervous washes and the careful, period detail, was really fine. His present style is a sort of frantic attempt at being loose and easy and is, I'm very sorry to say, for I did so much admire his other work, only sloppy. His previous universe was so nicely neat and carefully structured and the horrible events were startling by contrast. The loathsome monster appearing in the tidily-drawn, tidy room was very effective. Now, with the sort of sprawled, slopped - in sets he has taken to these last years, it doesn't really matter if there's a snake on the carpet.

Who are your favorite gag and political cartoonists?

I think I'll pass on that one. I could make a list, but then I might make a different list tomorrow.

Could it be true that possibly you take a bit of a fiendish delight in startling delicately natured readers?

I'll have to admit I do sometimes actually cackle aloud if I've pulled off a particularly ghastly effect.

Who are your favorite syndicated artists and strips?

First, no one has ever come within light - years of KRAZY KAT. No one. It is a thing entirely by itself. Well, I loved DICK TRACY when he was going after fiends and not traipsing off to the moon. The blueprint clarity of Gould's drawings was great, and I never failed to be fascinated by all the expressions he managed to get into his monster faces, even, I swear it, The Blank. I would nominate Mr. Pruneface as my offhand favorite villain. Then ORPHAN ANNIE was lots of fun and extraordinarily violent. My God, it was bloodthirsty. I remember respecting the hell out of PRINCE VALIANT, but I never really enjoyed it. TINY TIM got messed up with some underground robots for awhile there, and was great. For some reason or other I enjoyed staring at the drawings of TOONERVILLE TROLLEY, without having any idea what it meant. I guess the great sort of slaphappy style got to me. H. T. Webster did beautiful things. I think Lichty is brilliant. I've gotten so fed up with PEANUTS that I now have a regular comic strip in the NATIONAL LAMPOON called NUTS which is dedicated to the proposition that all those dear, wise little creatures of Schulz are so many saccharine fantasies. I think sometimes if I see one more Snoopy toilet bowl cover I will throw up.

PLAYBOY is no doubt your best market. When did you make your connection with them, and was it much of a struggle for you prior to this? Where had your art appeared before PLAYBOY?

I tied in with PLAYBOY in 1959 after COLLIER'S suddenly vanished. COLLIER'S was my first major market sale and my mainstay. I was having a terrible time trying to get anybody to buy any of my work. What usually happened, after I showed my work to this or that editor, was that the editor would laugh and laugh and then hand me back the cartoons saying, "I think they're great, but our readers wouldn't understand them."

All of the editors shared this fundamental belief that a great gulf of taste and intelligence separated them from their readers, I don't know on what evidence. Gurney Williams, who was editor of COLLIER'S, shared in this belief and, though he was kindness itself, he bought none of my drawings. Then he left COLLIER'S to become humor editor -- I've always thought that was a very depressing title -- of LOOK. In the interim, Bill Chessman, the art editor of COLLIER'S, filled in until they could find a regular man. Not being a cartoon editor, he didn't know what sort of material he should or should not buy, so he bought several of mine and so became my discoverer, bless his heart.

Then when Jerry Beatty came in to be their permanent man, he kept on buying my stuff and I was launched and no longer had to rely on selling Ziff-Davis an occasional $6.00 sale. It felt good. But then COLLIER'S went away, and while I was selling most of the major markets, it was a scuffle. Fortunately, by a series of flukes.

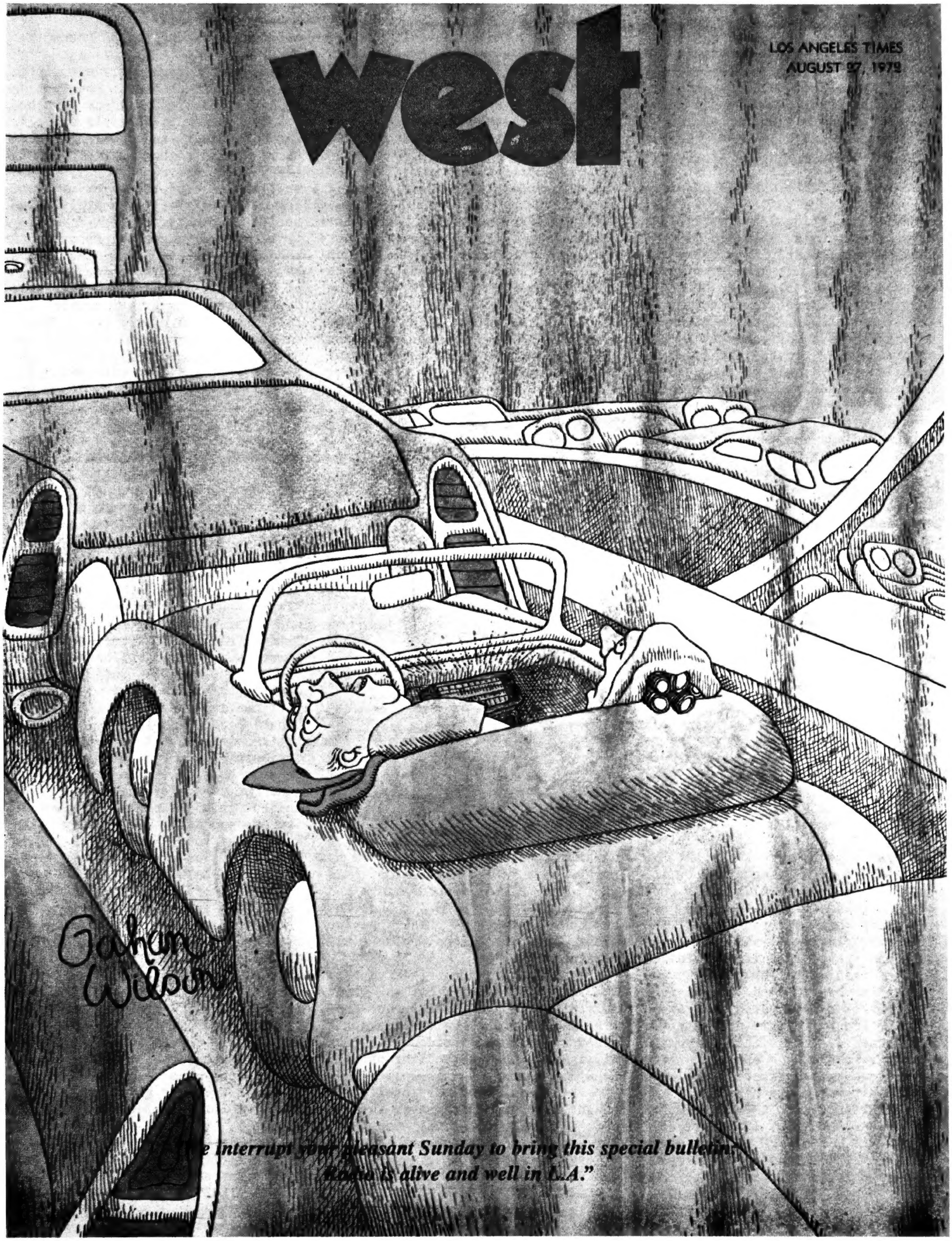
Then a new magazine appeared on the stands called TRUMP, and it was a super-classy production version of MAD and had, as its editor, Harvey Kurtzman himself, snatched from Bill Gaines. I didn't know Harvey at that point, but I'd always liked his approach, and I figured I might be able to tie in with him. So, since TRUMP was listed on its masthead as being in Chicago, and since I visited my parents in the Christmas season in Chicago, I took some cartoons to the Chicago address given for TRUMP that Christmas season.

The place turned out to be a little brownstone in the Near North Side, and they told me that TRUMP wasn't in Chicago after all, it was in New York. I was about to go, feeling, understandably, a bit of a simp, when a fellow came down the narrow stairs of the brownstone and said, "Hi, I'm Art Paul--Hef wants to see you," so I followed him up the narrow stairs into a small, dark room where there was a lean, dark man talking on the telephone. "That's good," said the lean man, "It's a swell article -- but it's anti-sin, see, and we're pro-sin." Then he hung up, stood, reached a hand out to shake mine, gave that sudden grin which is now world-famous, and said, "I've been waiting to see you!" So my getting into COLLIER'S was a fluke and my getting into PLAYBOY was a fluke.

What is your procedure in creating a full-page color cartoon for PLAYBOY? How long is it from the idea stage to the finished cartoon?

I send in roughs to Hefner and he writes OK in red on some of them and OK in blue on others. The ones marked OK in red are to be done as color finishes, those marked OK in blue are to be done as black-and-white finishes, the ones not marked at all are mine to do with what I will. It takes me about two days to do a color drawing--if it goes smoothly, that is--and then I like to have it hang around for a couple of days after that to see if I can figure out some last little touches and tightening-ups where they might improve it.

By what method do you color your work?


west
LOS ANGELES TIMES
AUGUST 27, 1978
Gahan Wilson
...e interrupt your pleasant Sunday to bring this special bulletin:
Kraig is alive and well in L.A."

I ink in the lines, do a basic color wash, then start building up overpaintings and colorings, and gradually add in more pen shadings as I go along.

Do you get more ideas for cartoons than you can draw?

No. That's a mean question.

What is your typical work day like?

I start around nine in the morning, provided something or other doesn't derail me, take a lunch break, and, again if nothing interferes, putter on until around five to five-thirty. I work quite hard, as a matter of fact.

What sort of a morgue do you use, a real one?

I would love a real one, but I can't afford it so I just keep a bunch of pictures around.

How far in advance to you have to work for PLAYBOY?

We don't work it that way, actually. Hef has an accumulation of stuff and I add to it and he uses it when he will. I never know which cartoon will show up next.

Can you give us an idea of the rates PLAYBOY pays for its color cartoons and smaller black - and - whites?

I think the black-and-white minimum is $150.00, but I'm not sure. I don't think there is any regular minimum for the "colormen," as we are called, but that each works out his own arrangement with the powers.

How do you feel about the work Harvey Kurtzman's done in comic art? Was he an easy editor to work for on HELP?

There is no doubt at all that Harvey is an historically important figure in the comic field. None at all. He was great fun to work with. He had an enthusiasm and a belief which was pleasant to be around.

What do you think of the satire in MAD today compared with the Kurtzman days? Did you ever try to work for them?

I think it's pretty bad, by and large. It's taken on a sort of smug stuffed shirt feel which is absolutely fatal to the sort of biting social satire they're supposed to be engaged in. No, I never tried to sell them anything.

Don Thompson had a letter published in Kurtzman's HELP #10 that said: "Great! You have Gahan Wilson. I have been a fan of this guy for years, and you are only the second magazine to really recognize his talent. COLLIER'S ran some really fine cartoons by him, but only PLAYBOY has really utilized the really tremendous talents of this boy. At first, one tends to compare him with Charles Addams, but there's a sprightlier and more varied touch to Gahan's cartoons. More of Gahan Wilson, by all means." Do you get much fan mail like that nowadays?

Yes, I do, bless their hearts.

You've written some good short works of science fiction and fantasy for THE MAGAZINE OF FANTASY AND SCIENCE FICTION and PLAYBOY. Have you considered writing a full-scale novel along these lines?

Thank you. Yes, I have, and I plan to do it.

How long have you been doing your monthly cartoons for F&SF?

I can't honestly recall when it was Ed Ferman and I shook hands on the regular F&SF arrangement, but it's got to be quite a few years ago. I am quite proud of that association, needless to say. It's an excellent magazine.

What other publications have your cartoons appeared in besides those already mentioned and CARTE BLANCHE, LOOK, THE MAGAZINE, THE NEW YORK TIMES BOOK REVIEW, PUNCH and VOICES?

GOURMET, AUDUBON, BOY'S LIFE, and other unlikely spots.

Have you ever tried to syndicate a daily strip?

I had a perfectly awful panel which I tried to sell after COLLIER'S collapsed, and, thank God, nobody bought it. I had an even worse strip idea which I will not go into either.

Have you ever had any comic book-length strips published? The closest thing to this I've seen is the three-page "The Monster Craze" in HELP #23, March 1965, but that was more a series of cartoons than an actual comic book strip. If you've

never done any, why not?

No, I haven't. No idea why not. Just this happened and that didn't happen.

How do you feel about today's underground comix?

I think they're fascinating. I'm really curious to see what it leads to. I'd always wondered what would happen if you had a bunch of cartoonists let loose with the lid absolutely off, no censorship at all, and now I'll see. My offhand guess is that they become increasingly mystical. Some of them are really very good.

Were you a big fan of the EC comics in particular in the early fifties?

Oh, yes. The thing that fascinates me about them is their stern morality. The God that rules over the world of EC is a just God, and will not tolerate any hanky-panky. "Vengeance is mine," saith that God, and he taketh away as horribly as he can. He rotteth the evildoers and he maketh their enemies come from their coffins and gnaw them into itsy pieces. Never was a more chilling compendium of cautionary tales put together than those assembled by EC. I am surprised, really, that Wertham was so annoyed at them. I would have thought he would have approved highly of such a batch of nay-sayers. All in all, the whole thing was a fascinating and revealing little bit of Americana.

"Oh, I bet he's the fellow who's in all the papers!"

What do you think the future will be like in the comic art field?

Well, there won't be many censorship restrictions, so that will have an effect -- barring some kind of puritannical b a c k l a s h, of course. The public will become much more sophisticated and demanding on all fronts, providing we don't fall back into a new Dark Age. And God only knows what technical innovations will open up to enlarge the possibilities of what the cartoonist will be able to do. From present trends I think the future looks very bright, indeed, and that we can expect to see some marvelous stuff.

Who are your favorite artists of the macabre?

Goya is a giant. Then I like the German and French expressionists. Bacon is scary as hell. Good old Bosch is beautiful. Rodin. Then, on a less spectacular plane, I learned a lot from the illustrators of the old WEIRD TALES magazine: Boris Dolgov, Matt Fox, Lee Brown Coye, Hannes Bok.

Are you a serious student of the occult?

It's a fascinating area, but I don't think you could describe me as a serious student.

Do you collect comic material of any kind?

Only in a sporadic kind of way. I don't have anything that could be dignified by the description "collection" along the lines of comic art.

Was Mickey Mouse your candidate for the presidency last time?

He's dead, isn't he? Actually I think it's high time we scrapped all this presidency business and had a benign dictator, such as myself.

Y o u ' v e done some memorable spreads for PLAYBOY over the years: "Sherlock," December 1959; "Poe," November 1960; "Chamber of Horrors" November 1961; "Mother Goose," September 1965; "Overkill," March 1969 --and while "Overkill" was certainly the most significant, the Madame Tussaud Wax Museum "Chamber of Horrors" story was probably the most entertaining. To quote your text from the feature:

"Halfway through my visit I became aware of the recurrance of an odd and gruesome sound. It was a sort of stifled groan: 'EEuuawh.' It took a while before I realized

"Bad as that, eh?"

that it was the Bakerloo Line underground train, muffled and far away beneath our feet. When I listened for it I could make it out quite clearly. And then I noticed something else. Whenever the train moans by, under the ground, the murderers sway. Not much; but they sway."

Just who were you trying to scare?

The readers, you fool.

Was your Wax Museum trip to London the most memorable one for you, or the time you cased Scotland Yard's files for material on Poe? What's your fascination for that city?

I lived in London for a year and paid a brief week's visit to it several years before that. It's a civilized place. They have live flowers in windowsill boxes in the banks, lovely parks, magnificent museums and libraries, dozens of fine theaters with interesting plays played by excellent actors, good restaurants of all descriptions. etc. It's heresy, but I like it much better than Paris. It doesn't come at you all at once, you have to keep digging into it, but it's got layer after layer after layer. And then of course it's the city of Holmes, and Fu Manchu was really at his best there, and there's Dickens, and so on, and so on.

Do you have plans for any more trips for PLAYBOY, or any spreads not requiring jaunts for them or for NATIONAL LAMPOON?

Oh, yes, I try a spread on Hef every so often, and did one for the NATIONAL LAMPOON for a science fiction issue last year. PLAYBOY has never sent me on a jaunt, by the way. I've done the spreads involving jaunts while on a jaunt of my own.

I've seen some terrific political cartoon commentary by you on the futility of war and the dangers of air pollution. Can you state for us your feelings on nuclear warfare and the current condition of the world, although your cartoons probably say more than a statement would?

I think you're right--my cartoons make my stance on politics and all pretty clear. I don't think there's the tiniest doubt that the paramount issue before us all is the saving of the planet Earth. It looks very nip and tucky at this writing, but, incredible as it may seem, I'm basically an optimist and think we will pull through. Of course this may be the very attitude which does us in. In any case, I'm delighted Hef -- by the way, one of the delights in the early days of working for PLAYBOY was to encounter various frauds at parties who claimed to be great buddies with Hefner and spoke of him fondly as "Hugh" -- is buying so many of my cartoons on an ecology theme as PLAYBOY gets into the halls of the powerful and the mighty commonly and just *maybe* one of my cartoons will do some good. They say every little bit helps. Of course I highly approve of nuclear warfare.

You've done scores of cartoons on fictional fiends and beasts, but who do you think was the biggest real-life monster in history?

Hard to say, there've been so many beauties. Hitler would be hard to top for sheer unabashed evil on the grand scale, I suppose, but it's such a rich field I think it would be impossible to pick a sure winner.

Is there much of anything you take seriously, or do you find humor in most any situation?

Pain, acute grief, utter terror, and acne.

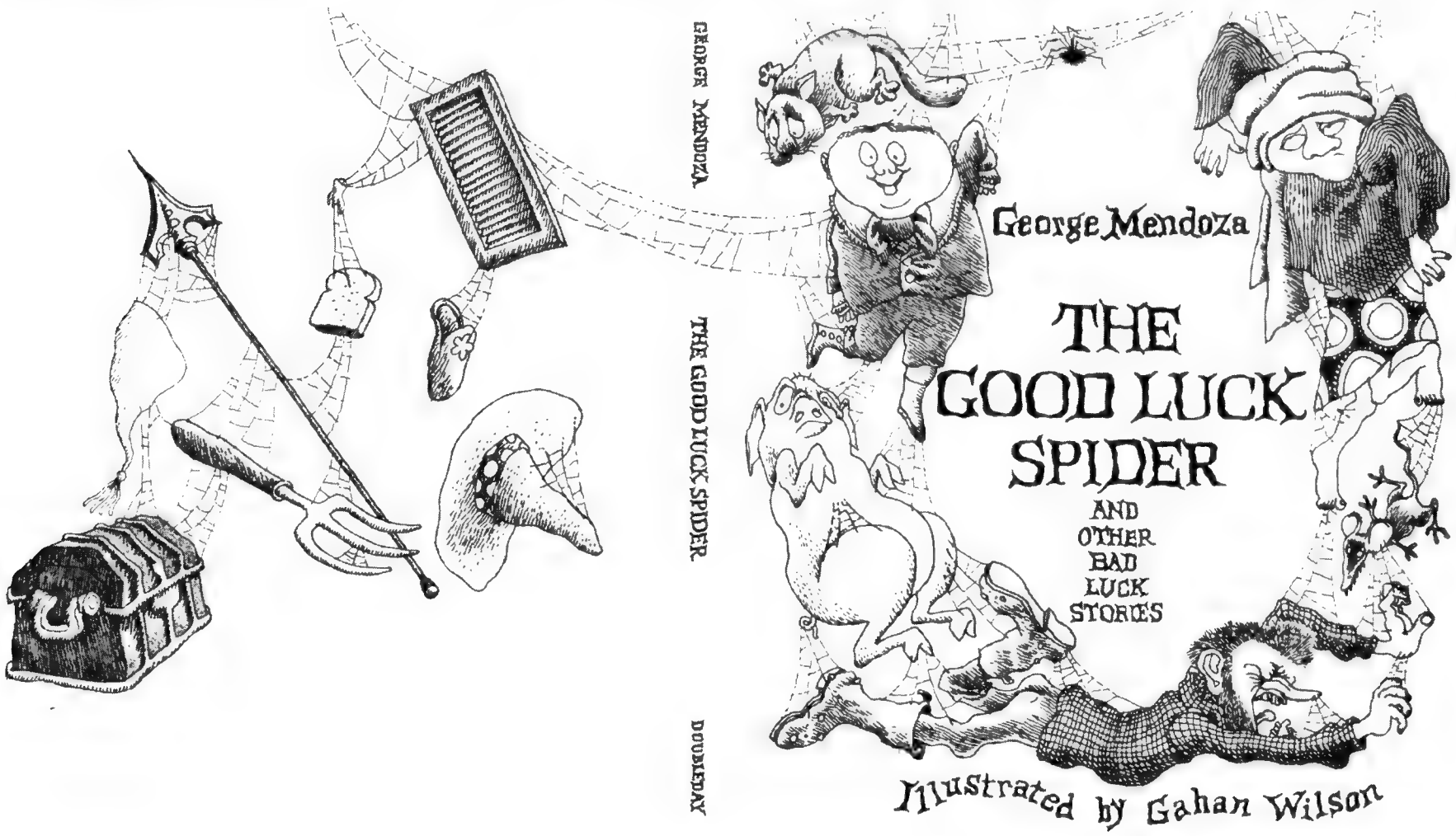
What great personal fears to you possess? How do you feel about death, snakes, heights, and so on?

None that I can bear speaking of. I think death is a perfectly understandable reaction to birth.

The only advertising art I've seen by you was in the Christmas 1971 issue of THE NEW YORKER -- a season's greeting from fashion designers Jerry Silverman and Shannon Rodgers. Have you done ad art for other concerns?

Yes, I'm happy to say, and I'll be delighted to do more any time. Fortunately, a lot of people who like my stuff are now becoming real official types who run agencies and like that, and they have remembered me, bless them.

Did anybody ever get miffed over your occasional use of satire directed at certain ad campaigns in your PLAYBOY cartoons -- such as the ones you did on RCA Victor and



Chase Manhattan Bank -- or do the companies approve of it as good publicity?

Never had anybody give me any trouble. I think, as you say, they're basically pleased. The only time I learned of anyone getting upset was when I did a drawing putting on an advertising agency for a privately-printed calendar and a few of their executives seemed to think someone was hatching a plot against them.

Do you ever get rejection slips these days? Has PLAYBOY ever rejected any of your ideas?

If I sell one color out of ten ideas I figure I'm doing very well. No, I don't get rejection slips.

Do you have any special favorites among your printed cartoons or spreads for any of the magazines?

Oh, I do, of course, but I honestly think I'm getting better and figure the best are yet to come. Half - witted as that probably sounds.

Your cartoons always have a sensitivity and a precision about them. Do you work quickly, or slowly and carefully?

S l o w l y and carefully, with lengthy pauses for thinking and naps.

Have you ever worked with gag writers or taken anyone's suggestions for cartoon ideas?

No. I have a fixation of never using any writers, ever. I like to have created the whole thing too much.

Do you take a kind of sadistic pleasure in knowing that some of your cartoons, because they are subtle, go over the heads of certain people?

Absolutely not. And if someone writes in saying they do not understand this or that joke, as they are sometimes wont to do, I write them back and carefully explain the thing. Interestingly enough, no one has ever written back to thank me.

What other sorts of art have you done professionally?

I've illustrated a number of children's books*, done a few magazine covers, FANTASY & SCIENCE FICTION and NATIONAL LAMPOON, and, while a student in the Art Institute of Chicago, now and then went out to parties and openings to do caricatures as I was the only cartoonist they had, and so when people called up and asked for somebody to do caricatures at parties and openings, I naturally sprang to mind. Incidentally, I was, at that point, a rotten caricaturist.

Are caricatures difficult for you to do?

No. They used to be, but they aren't any more.

Are you still interested in the fine arts? Have you done much serious work in painting, sculpture, and so on?

Yes and yes, but I feel my cartoons and my writing are the best mediums for my getting across what I seem to want to say. I think I accomplish more with them than I would with, say, painting.

My all-time favorite cartoon by you is the Santa-Claus-clogged-in-the-chimney one from an old PLAYBOY, reprinted in your third album, I PAINT WHAT I SEE. But has Santa really *passed on to his reward?*

Don't come to me with stuff like that. Ask your father or mother. And stop crying.

Do you feel you owe your success to hard work and determination, being in the right place at the right time, or "the luck of the Irish?" Gahan Wilson is an Irish name, isn't it?

I owe my success to hard work and determination and to being in the right place at the right time. Gahan is an Irish name -- the Wilson is British-Scotch, and as far as "the luck of the Irish" is concerned, maybe it doesn't rain on Saint Patty's parade, but have you seen the poor country lately? It's enough to put years on you.

The Irish are known to be a bit mystical. Do you have any special supernatural powers?

You'll have to ask my agent.

Three collections of your cartoons have been published to date: GAHAN WILSON'S GRAVESIDE MANNER, a 1965 paperback; THE MAN IN THE CANNIBAL POT, printed in hardback in 1970; and the currently available Simon & Schuster hardcover, I PAINT WHAT I SEE, 1971. Were the first two books, now out of print and as scarce as dodo eggs, made up mostly of reprints like the third? Did you edit them all?

Yes and yes.

I've heard talk of PLAYBOY putting out a softcover book of Wilson cartoons, a la the ones featuring the work of John Dempsey and Phil Interlandi. When will it be published?

PLAYBOY has recently brought out a collection of my work which has appeared in that magazine. The title of it is, predictably, PLAYBOY'S GAHAN WILSON, its cover is appropriately green -- with my cartoon, "I Think I Won!" pictured on it -- it has hundreds of cartoons, most in full color, and costs a mere $2.50. Buy it.

What are your thoughts on the PLAYBOY empire?

It's been quite an experience, watching the thing grow. I used to call up and the phone would ring on the editor's desk. Now it goes through about five switchboards. I think that the empire is a good thing for us all and that we should all be very grateful for it. What's good for PLAYBOY is good for the country.

Do you think that serious horror entertainment, be it in comics, movies, or television, has harmful effects on children's minds? Do you let your own children watch shows like NIGHT GALLERY?

I suppose it does, but I feel in my own case it was worth it. I'd let them watch NIGHT GALLERY, but I refuse to let them listen to DEAR ABBY.

What do you do for inspiration?

Feed the hopper. Read a lot. Mull. Take walks. Watch Walter Cronkite. My main problem is making my cartoons more grotesque and outlandish than the lead story in the morning paper. Now and then I pull it off, now and then I'm way behind. Sometimes I can't understand why everybody isn't a macabre cartoonist.

"I think we've located the cause of that tie-up at Thirty-fourth Street and Seventh Avenue!"

**Of these, Maggie Thompson wrote in COMIC ART #6, 1966: "Gahan Wilson illustrated the 'Matthew Looney' books by Jerome Beatty, Jr. These are nutty little science fiction tales for the third and fourth graders -- and are quite entertaining. Wilson has seemingly managed to restrain his macabre side for this work, retaining his customary style without terrifying little kiddies to bits."*

"... But, seriously ..."

Graphic Story Magazine Interview:

HARRY HARRISON

Born in Stamford, Connecticut in 1925, Harry Harrison lived in New York City until 1943 when he joined the army where he was a power-operated turret and computing-gunsight specialist turned machine-gun instructor during the war, returning to his art studies upon his discharge in 1946.

After a ten year career as commercial illustrator for magazines and comic books, and later as art director for the news magazine PICTURE WEEK, he turned to editing and writing. Among the magazines he's edited are SCIENCE FICTION ADVENTURES, SPACE SCIENCE FICTION, ROCKET STORIES, FANTASY FICTION, AMAZING STORIES, FANTASTIC STORIES and SF IMPULSE -- this last magazine published in Great Britain.

Harrison is also editor of the annual BEST SCIENCE FICTION anthologies, as well as the NOVA anthology series of original science fiction stories. His many novels include the DEATHWORLD series, PLANET OF THE DAMNED, THE TECHNICOLOR TIME MACHINE, the STAINLESS STEEL RAT series, and MAKE ROOM! MAKE ROOM!, from which the recently released MGM film SOYLENT GREEN was adapted.

In addition to his writing he teaches a course in science fiction at San Diego State University, and has been a speaker at the summer Stamford University Institute for Science Fiction and Fantasy in 1970 and 1972. He has been guest of honor at conventions in England and the United States, three times a judge at the Science Fiction Film Festival in Trieste, and invited guest of the Science Fiction Film Festival in Rio de Janeiro, and the first International Science Fiction Conference in Tokyo.

When he began to write freelance fiction and articles he found it impossible to work in New York, so he took his family--wife Joan, and children Todd and Moira--to Cuautla, Mexico, a small farming town in the plains below the snow-capped volcano Popocatepetl. It was ten years before they returned to the United States, living in Europe for the most part, Denmark, Italy and England. During this time he learned to speak Spanish, Italian, Danish and Esperanto. He now makes his home in San Diego, California, where the following interview was conducted in December of 1972, with updated material added in May of 1973.

-- Bill Spicer and Pete Serniuk

With Ray Harryhausen and Brian Aldiss on the set of THE FIRST MEN IN THE MOON

When did you first get into comics?

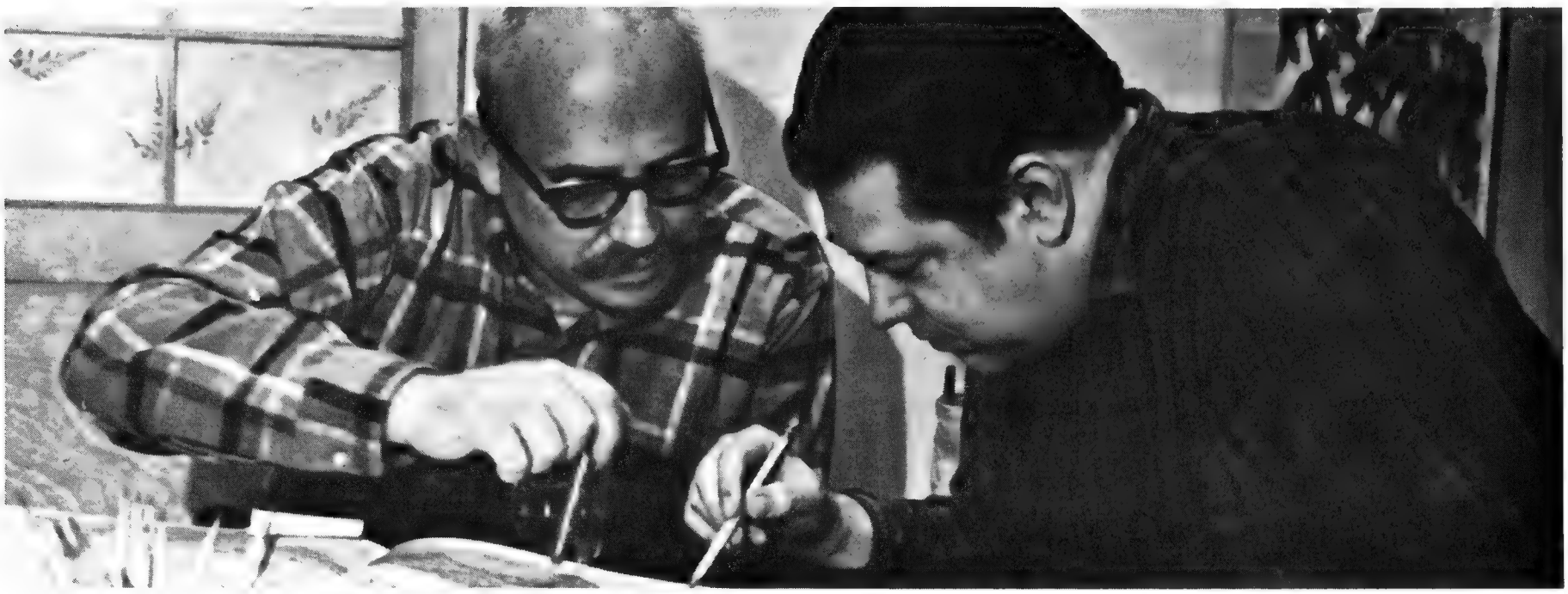
Pretty early, around 1946 or '47, about the same time I was going to art school. Burne Hogarth had a drawing class at a little school in New York City, and I entered on one of those GI Bill things that sprang up after the war. It was a regular accredited art school, but with dumbhead instructors -- only Burne had a good class there and everyone with any real interest or talent ended up in it. We were *all* just a lot of ex-GIs riding the GI Bill. He transferred us to this one little room first and then started his own school called the Cartoonists and Illustrators School. I think they've changed the name now to something a little more elegant. But Burne got the money and a partner and the GI backing and moved into an old Bell Telephone building, opened his own school, and bit by bit everyone came to it. The first guy I met was Ernie Bache, and we wound up working together for a few years after that. Then Al Williamson appeared, the only guy who wasn't an ex-GI, just in from South America, a kid of sixteen or seventeen who spoke fluent Spanish. Grew up in South America, came back to New York, and was just a kid hanging around trying to get into the art field. He was a copier then, Alex Raymond mainly, and at the time I didn't think he could draw as much as an original line. Then, a name that might ring a bell, Joe Pena, who was pretty good, came up about the same time. Then Wally Wood, Ross Andru, Mike Esposito, Roy Krenkel, John Severin and Jerry Kolden, whose real name was Jerry Goldenberg. Other names will come to mind as we start talking.

At this time you were going to school, not yet professionally doing comics?

We were still just all living on the GI Bill, seventy-five bucks a month for a single guy, fifteen more for art supplies. We mostly bought art books and sold them for cash, keeping just one pencil and one brush. But very quickly the guys who were going to make it made it. Ross Andru started pencilling the Sunday TARZAN pages right in class. I guess you could say he was paid by both Burne Hogarth and the government to pencil the Sunday pages. It was a night class, seven to ten or six to ten, something like that, five nights a week. Another guy showed up who'd done some work at the Disney Studio, Tex Blaisdell, who was very, very good. I started working with Wally Wood at this time, a very facile guy who really had a natural talent. At that time comics were going great guns, and we started selling art to Victor Fox, our first professional comics work. Anybody could work at Fox, whether they could draw well or not. We worked together because neither of us could hack it alone. We were a complete team, we did everything together. In the beginning I think he pencilled and I inked, and then he got very good with inking and did the heads and hands. He'd break down the pages very tight with the figures, and we'd pass the pages back and forth each handling certain kinds of swipes.

You weren't doing any comics writing at this time?

Not for Fox at the beginning. We were illustrating a lot of romance titles, which were big then. Very badly written things, with nine-panel pages and five hundred words in captions and dialogue. Wally lettered so thick we'd have only about one square inch



With Dr. Leon E. Stover, researching STONEHENGE

per panel for the drawings.

Were you part of the shop Victor Fox got all his material from?

Yes, but he would always farm it out. No one worked in an actual shop, all of it was done at home. Fox had an endless stream of art directors, and all of these jokers would take kickbacks. Guys would come in to show them their material, the stuff with all the swipes. The art director would say, "Well, yeah, this is great stuff, but we don't pay very much... know what I mean?" I think the rate at Fox was about twenty-three dollars per page for ten-page stories. And while he was talking he'd slip you a note saying something to the effect that they also expected kickbacks of five dollars a page. This made a big difference to us in the rates, of course. But all these guys took kickbacks, and if you didn't go along with it you wouldn't get any work.

You were responsible to this art director, who'd pay you?

He didn't actually pay us, the checks would come from Fox. We would slide in this ten-page pile of crap with a real good splash page for the first page on top. He would look at only the first page and count the other nine, flipping through 'em fast. Nobody really cared about the quality, nobody looked at these books, no one read the things very carefully. So he'd count the pages, we would give him the fifty dollars or whatever it came to -- five bucks a page in kickbacks -- and then we'd get our check in the mail from Fox, not necessarily in a week or two but in a month or so, sometimes slower than that. The money owed would add up, and you'd almost literally have to go in and beat up on the guy to get your dough out of him. Sometimes we'd get some of the bigger guys in the school to go in our place. Fox himself was hardly ever around -- I once saw him go by, ZOOM, like that. The vice-president was someone by the name of Ganz, I think, a real milquetoast kind of guy, so one time when they were behind in paying we said we were going to go in there and threaten to beat him up and get our money. We set up an act. Wally was a very quiet guy, smoked a lot, and he had this ugly black fedora hat we'd use as a prop. I said I'd give him a nudge in Ganz's office and then he was to take the cigarette out of his mouth and crush it out in the ash tray at the right moment and we'd act like we were going to beat him up unless he came across. So, all right. In we went. Now Ganz...Ganz was about six-foot-five, but he really was a coward. We threatened to beat the hell out of him. I gave Wally the nudge, he leaned over and put his cigarette out right in the middle of Ganz's desk blotter, missing the ash tray. Great effect, you know, like something out of a George Raft gangster movie. This really upset the guy. But we got the check from him. Then we took it to the bank, only to find out later it had bounced off the face of the moon. But the second time we got it, and it was for about six hundred dollars, it went through okay. We needed the dough badly. Six hundred in those days was an awful lot of money.

Did you work for any other companies besides Fox at that time?

Yeah, we did, we took our samples around town and tried them all. We pencilled a story for Fawcett, too much work for the money. Can't remember the name of the comic. We also worked on BLACKHAWK for Quality, pencilling the thing for eighteen dollars a page, which turned out to be more work than pencilling *and* inking for others at twenty-six.

Quality also bought everything from a shop?

They did go through an agent, who skimmed some off the top. We didn't do that much work for Quality. There were a lot of single jobs here and there. You could take on this kind of stuff and help each other out, spreading the work around. One guy got a package deal from Fox, some Bible story, SAMSON AND DELILAH I think it was, when the official movie version was done by Dell or some outfit like that. Fox commissioned this comic and wanted the whole thing into a book in a day and a half or two days. He would give us these packages, getting the thing on Monday, wanting it back on Wednesday morning. We had a guy writing the script in another room. We would bring it into one room and six of us at once worked on it, pencilling, inking, passing the pages around like a treadmill. We'd race each other to see who could bang out a page the fastest. I inked one page in seventeen minutes. When packages like this turned up we'd usually have to work fast as hell to get them out. This book was to take advantage of one of those Bible movies that came out in the late forties or early fifties when there was a whole bunch of 'em going around. I think it was from MGM, and while Dell had the official movie version in their comic, Fox wanted to issue his own version with the same title as the movie. And got away with it because he was stealing from the Bible, not MGM. A lot of this was going on at the time. Guys would get a package and have someone else help them out with it, mostly incompetent artists who needed the work. We'd just split the money up. You'd take whatever jobs you could get. I was also doing lettering for CRIME DOES NOT PAY, nine panels a page with eight thousand words, but they paid a pretty good rate, something like three-fifty or four dollars, when others were paying only two. With Charlie Biro you really earned it, but it was still too much work for the money. We kept shuffling around, doing a lot of nonsense -- one job here, one job there, whoever would buy it, until we went down one day to EC and Bill Gaines, the first time we got any kind of really decent publisher. He wasn't paying much either, about twenty-six or twenty-eight a page.

When was this?

Around 1948, somewhere in there. His old man had just died, leaving him the publishing business. Bill was the playboy of the western world. He had Al Feldstein and Johnny Craig in the outer office, acting as art directors. Gave them free room and board, gave them free office space, just to keep their eyes on the office and tell him if artists coming in looking for work were any good or not. The first time we saw Gaines we gave our samples to Feldstein. It was a couple of months later when Harvey Kurtzman brought in his first story. He was doing a serialized thing, HEY LOOK or SILVER LININGS or something. I don't know what other credits he had, but he came in with a whole story, broken down and lettered. He wanted to write and draw both. I think Gaines and Feldstein were a little uptight about that, since they wanted writer and artist separate. But Bill called Wally and I in to look at Kurtzman's story and we really liked it. It was good stuff. He started editing war books later and then went on to MAD, as you know.

What did you and Wood do for Gaines when you started at EC?

A lot of popular romances, mostly western romances. We had a carload of romance credits in those days at Fox, it was about all you could get. Some crime, but Feldstein and Craig had the crime sewed up, doing most of it themselves. I think we did only one story, "A Bed of Murder," for WAR AGAINST CRIME around 1949 or '50. For EC it was chiefly bad western romances, and then somewhere along the line we talked Bill into trying to start a science fiction comic, only instead of doing real science fiction he copped out and called it WEIRD SCIENCE.

You suggested the format?

We just pressured him into trying something along those lines. I was always a science fiction fan, and Wally was interested in science fiction, too. I gave Gaines a lot of it to read. We just wanted to do a science fiction comic, since there was none of that kind at all at the time. We kept working on Bill, and he finally took a flyer at it. I don't think it sold very well, no better or worse than anything else. Nothing at EC sold well then. You broke even at about 45% or 50%, so with a minimum print order of 200,000 copies you could sell only 125,000 and still get by. He never told me the sales figures, but I'd guess most of his comics just did get into the black.

We had no control over the titles of the two science fiction comics or their exact formats. We just kept nudging Bill every once in a while to try them out. EC was kind of a small

Peter PAWN

Many, many miles away, somewhere there is a land... the LAND of GAMES.. Among the many countries in this land are... PUZZELOONIA, land of games and puzzles...

BRASSHATTEN... where the toy soldiers come from...

POKERIA... home of all the playing cards...

and MANY others

But the biggest and most powerful is CHESSYLVANIA...

..The ruler of all this fair countryside is ...

SURE, I'M RICH! I HAVE THE BIGGEST CASTLE, THE LARGEST ARMY, AND THE FATTEST TREASURY! I HAVE **EVERYTHING!!** BUT AM I HAPPY? OH, NO... I'VE ALSO GOT THE **BIGGEST TROUBLES!!**

THE WHITE KING

OH, MOST ROYAL HIGHNESS, OH LUSTROUS PEARL OF LIGHT IN THE EAST - DO NOT FEAR THAT FIEND, THE **PURPLE ROOK!**

LION HEARTED RULER, YOUR ENEMIES TREMBLE BEFORE YOUR MIGHT - OH, FEARLESS FOE OF THE FORCES OF FEAR!

HIP HIP HURRAH!

HOW RIGHT YOU ARE! WHY SHOULD I, YOUR BOLD AND COURAGEOUS KING FEAR THIS TIN-HORN LOW LIFE?

VROOM!

THERE'S A NOTE ON THE ARROW!

NO! NO!

Low wretch of a King.. The sight of your ugly face has displeased me long enough! Your days are numbered! Surrender or you are doomed... You will not ESCAPE!!!

The Purple Rook

WHAT CAN I DO? THIS WRETCH WILL SURELY SLAY ME.. CAN **ANYONE** SAVE ME?

HARRISON

I WILL, YOUR MAJESTY! I, CHESTER THE JESTER, WILL SAVE YOUR LIFE! I **HAVE A PLAN!!**

Done in art school, 1946

MY STORY #10 1950

MY MAIL-ORDER Sweetheart
I HAD NO OTHER CHOICE BUT TO MAKE THE AWFUL DECISION OF BARTERING MY LOVE TO SAVE A LIFE. MY HEART WAS TORN BY THIS CRUEL SACRIFICE, YET I MADE IT WILLINGLY. MY STRANGE JOURNEY BROUGHT ME ONLY GRIEF AND SHAME.
Diana Reid Box 314 c/o The Daily Gazette
Desperate circumstances compel me to marry. Will make excellent wife to a man under forty who will advance $5000. I am 20 years old, healthy, well educated, and a good housekeeper.
Diana Reid
Box 314
c/o The Daily Ga
LIFE HAD ALWAYS BEEN A STRUGGLE. DAD DIED LEAVING US NOTHING BUT DEBTS AND A HEAVILY MORTGAGED HOME. SOMEHOW, WE HAD ALWAYS MANAGED, UNTIL MOTHER TOOK ILL!
MOTHER, WHAT'S THE MATTER? YOU LOOK SO PALE!
I-I DON'T KNOW. I FELT WEAK AND FAINT...
DON'T WORRY, DIANA. I'LL BE ALL RIGHT!
I WANT TO MAKE SURE OF THAT! I'M CALLING DR. RIGLEY.

MODERN LOVE #6 1950

"I HAD BEEN MARRIED FOR JUST A YEAR WHEN TRAGEDY STRUCK AND TOOK MY HUSBAND FROM MY SIDE! IN MY LONELINESS I TURNED TO DOCTOR GREGG MACY, AND FOUND TO MY SURPRISE THAT HE HAD BECOME MUCH MORE THAN A COMPANION TO ME...HAD BECOME, IN FACT...
THE LOVE THAT MIGHT HAVE BEEN...
a true MODERN Love Story
"BERT RAYMOND AND I HAD BEEN MARRIED FOR JUST ABOUT A YEAR WHEN ONE DAY HE TOOK LEAVE FOR WHAT WE SUPPOSED WAS A ROUTINE FLIGHT TO THE WEST COAST!"
GOOD-BYE, DARLING...I'VE GOT JUST ENOUGH TIME TO CATCH THAT PLANE!
I CAN STILL GET INTO A COAT AND GO TO THE AIRPORT WITH YOU BERT...
DON'T BE SILLY, BETTY... I'LL BE THERE AND UP INTO THE WILD BLUE IN A JIFFY! WITHIN TWENTY-FOUR HOURS I SHOULD BE BACK...WITH A CHECK FOR THESE SIX PAINTINGS!

family, only four or five guys there doing all the work. Bill was a very friendly guy whose presence encouraged mad things to go on in the office, footprints on the ceiling, that kind of thing. He was always open to suggestions, so Wally and I just kept pushing and pushing. I'm sure WEIRD SCIENCE and WEIRD FANTASY didn't do very well. Nothing ever happened *well* there until MAD. By the time MAD #1 came out I was front man for a publisher who'd gone bankrupt four or five times, putting together books for him at a hundred dollars a package. But the deep, dark secret was how well MAD was doing. When it finally came out how well it was selling we jumped in with an imitation called NUTS, which lasted only a few issues. But MAD really made EC. Up until then it was just one more comic house, staggering along. The artwork was great. Wally was incredibly good, and those war comics of Kurtzman's were sensational with Jack Davis, Severin & Elder, George Evans and the others. They were paid beans for it, but they were all very good. Kurtzman nearly killed himself with the war stories, getting good artists who were poor at the time, hiring them for peanuts, and staying on their backs constantly to keep them doing their best work.

Didn't the horror books sell well?

I guess all horror did do all right. And Bill's horror was more horrible than the rest of them, so I think they made some money on those for a while. But where they really made it was on MAD, which took off. Then horror killed the comics, and what came after the horror, when sales dropped, was MAD magazine which saved Gaines' hide. Other firms folded. That's when I left comics, shortly thereafter. There were six hundred titles one month, and after the investigation it went to two hundred. Four out of five artists were walking the streets. There was a big run on artists before, with the horror, when you could get work if you could just draw your name. Anything went. They'd package the stuff with real nice covers, garbage inside.

With your interest in science fiction why didn't you write more stories for the early EC?

I hadn't even thought much about writing then, staying busy with doing artwork. I smuggled some stories in and someone else would put their names on them. I never had my name on the stories, nobody knew I was doing them. My first wife, Evelyn, had ambitions to be a writer, and she managed to get story assignments from EC because Wally and I worked there -- but she was not a script writer. I did the stories and she put her name on them. She turned in a good number of them as I remember. The high point of this was a time when Al Feldstein kept me out of a story conference because only the writers were to be admitted, no low-life artists. I don't think he ever found out that all her stories were done by me.

But in those days I was more interested in the art. By this time Wally and I had broken up, he'd become a much better artist than me by then. What with the typical personality conflicts of artists we went our separate ways, and he turned over the EC account to me. Jules Feiffer I'd met when I'd gone to Will Eisner's office looking for work, and I had Jules pencil one or two stories for me which I inked. "Werewolf" in a VAULT OF HORROR was one, I think. He might also have written it, I don't remember for sure. He was writing THE SPIRIT then also. He wasn't a very good penciller for the kind of thing EC was doing in their horror books, and without Wally I wasn't a very good inker. I lost the account. For a while I had the account when he went off to work for other people -- I believe he was drawing THE SPIRIT for Eisner -- then I lost it, went away, and he came back to work on his own for Gaines.

How good was your working relationship with Wood?

Just like me, very hard to work with. We all had big egos in comics. We got into a lot of fights, one of the reasons we broke up. We'd work

for two or three days straight, almost around the clock, always late trying to meet a deadline. About nine or ten at night we'd have to take a few bennies to stay awake. We did this about once a week, and would get pretty tired. Wally would fall asleep at the drawing board, pencil poised over a panel, then wake up a few minutes later and start drawing where he'd left off. Sometimes we'd get so tired and behind schedule we'd just ink in whole panels from scratch, not even using a pencil. I knew very few guys who worked together more than a couple of years. There was always some friction going on. Wally worked with Joe Orlando probably better than with me.

After Wally and I broke up I was working mostly for Fawcett, and I had a friend by the name of Warren Broderick, who was also in school with me, doing my pencilling. He was a black guy who didn't want to get in there and push, didn't want to face whitey in the office. We developed a nice clear style, no great shakes, but it worked.

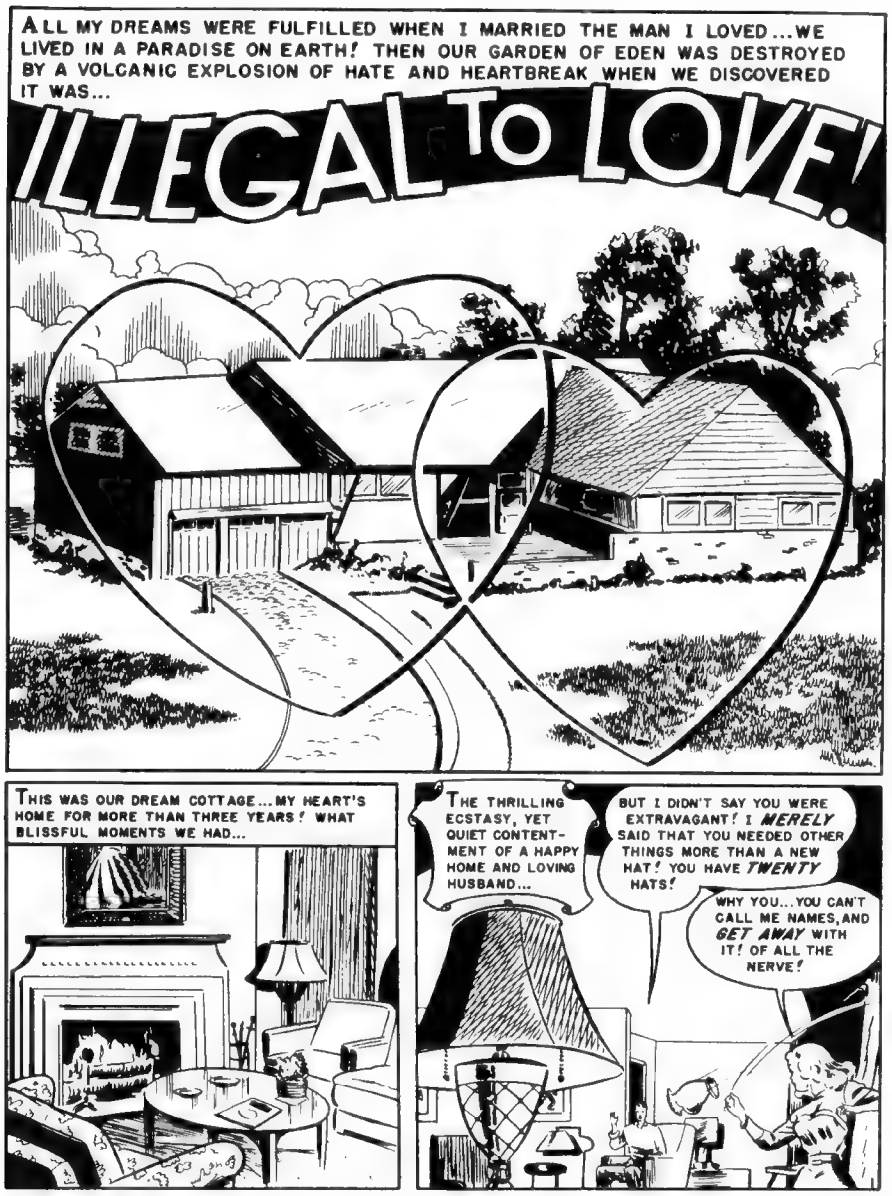
And I was packaging comics and magazines. Somewhere along the line I put together an imitation of CONFIDENTIAL called GRAPEVINE for Perrin Publications. To be a publisher then as now all you had to do was have a distributor's contract. That's all you needed to do business. With the contract you went to the printer. The distributor paid the printer's bill. So all you had to do was lay out a thirty-two page magazine at twenty-five dollars a page, a thousand bucks of your own cash, and you could be a package publisher. I packaged for Billy Friedman and Lou Strickof, with four or five titles. I edited, wrote what I could, drew and inked some of it. NUTS was one, and there were a couple of horror and weird titles. CAPTAIN ROCKET, science fiction comics that lasted only one or two issues. TRUE STORIES OF STAMPS was another. That's when I got into editing, packaging these things for Friedman and Strickof. When comics went under I was already writing and editing, so I slipped sideways into editing and writing for science fiction magazines.

You didn't do any comics after the Comics Code came in?

I did some Code titles, yes. Christ yes. Judge Murphy or Kelly, whatever his name was, was in charge of the Code as a figurehead, and they had a lot of decayed old virgins going over the art panel by panel. When the pages came back we'd be armed with a tube of white and bottle of ink, flattening the girls' chests down. We had to do ridiculous revisions, really heavy-handed nonsense. Then I got out.

Before that there was a lot of fun in doing comics. We did two or three stories which gave us some laughs monkeying around with the artwork, mainly to relieve us from the boredom of having to illustrate lousy scripts. One was on a story called "Playtime Cowgirl" for an EC western romance, where we brought the thing in originally with a big dong in the horse's crotch, about four feet long, circumcised, with crabs, *real* crabs and lobsters hanging from it, spider webs, bandaids all over it. Turned it in to Gaines, who loved it and kept it to show his advertising man, Lyle Stuart. They showed it around, then forgot about it. Finally it went to the engraver where they took black plates of it, then proofs, which got as far as the colorist who was the one who caught it. "Mr. Gaines, isn't this kind of a funny looking horse?" Gaines screamed to think it could get so close to going through. We just painted it out. They reshot the black plate, but it almost got by.

Another one was also in the romance comics. They always had some title like "She Married A Man Who Gave Her No Love," which we changed to "She Married A Man With No Balls At All," and pasted it over the real title. Stuck a lot of baseballs and footballs around the artwork, which could be peeled off. We'd sit around in the studio and think of ways to liven up the stories this way.


ALL MY DREAMS WERE FULFILLED WHEN I MARRIED THE MAN I LOVED...WE LIVED IN A PARADISE ON EARTH! THEN OUR GARDEN OF EDEN WAS DESTROYED BY A VOLCANIC EXPLOSION OF HATE AND HEARTBREAK WHEN WE DISCOVERED IT WAS...
ILLEGAL TO LOVE!
THIS WAS OUR DREAM COTTAGE...MY HEART'S HOME FOR MORE THAN THREE YEARS! WHAT BLISSFUL MOMENTS WE HAD...
THE THRILLING ECSTASY, YET QUIET CONTENTMENT OF A HAPPY HOME AND LOVING HUSBAND...
BUT I DIDN'T SAY YOU WERE EXTRAVAGANT! I MERELY SAID THAT YOU NEEDED OTHER THINGS MORE THAN A NEW HAT! YOU HAVE TWENTY HATS!
WHY YOU...YOU CAN'T CALL ME NAMES, AND GET AWAY WITH IT! OF ALL THE NERVE!

MODERN LOVE #8 1950

MY LOVE FOR KEN WAS AS BIG AS THE WHOLE WIDE WEST, BUT I NEARLY DESTROYED THAT LOVE, FOR I WAS JUST A...
Playtime Cowgirl
WHOA, THAR, PARDNER! I'M LASSOING YOU FOR LIFE!
LOOKS LIKE I'M ROPED AND TIED BY LOVE!
AFTER WORKING HARD ALL YEAR, I WAS EAGERLY LOOKING FORWARD TO THE VACATION I HAD PLANNED WITH MY FRIENDS AT A REAL WESTERN DUDE RANCH...
GEE, HE LOOKS JUST LIKE ONE OF THOSE COWBOY STARS IN THE MOVIES!
I HOPE THERE ARE SOME MORE HANDSOME COWBOYS LIKE HIM AROUND!
THE SILVER SADDLE
WELCOME TO THE SILVER SADDLE, FOLKS, BEST DUDE RANCH IN THESE HERE PARTS! I KNOW THIS WILL BE THE MOST THRILLIN' VAGATION YUH EVER HAD!
WOOD + HARRISON

SADDLE ROMANCES #11 1950

I had my own studio at one point, a loft on Sixth Avenue. Ernie Bache, Roy Krenkel, Al Williamson, and part of the time Frank Frazetta, a lot of guys came through the office, midtown drunks, everyone. Ernie, Roy and I did a lot of comics together. Roy and I did some science fiction illustrations, book jackets, magazine illustrations, advertising. Meanwhile all the other guys from our art class were doing well, Mike Esposito, Ross Andru, John Severin, a lot of guys whose names you see around.

I'm told Sol Cohen, who now publishes AMAZING and FANTASTIC, was once with EC, but I've never heard anyone at EC mention him. Just where does he fit into the early EC?

Not into EC at all to my knowledge, unless it was before my time. Maybe he was there, but I never saw him around. He was at Avon when I met him, where he was doing everything. Avon was on the rocks, going bankrupt, all the editors had quit because they couldn't afford to pay them, and only Sol hung on for a share of the corporation. He was the only editor left. He was the whole corporation, in fact. I don't know what his connection with EC might have been.

EC was a quality firm in the sense that they were established and they paid their bills. Earlier we'd worked for all the schlock houses. EC was a good solid outfit. Only a few artists there, but if you worked there you worked steady. You worked at your own speed. They saw to it that when you turned one story in, you got another, and they didn't ask how long it took to draw it. If you worked faster, kept the quality up, everything was fine. Gaines took care of his own people. It was a great way to work with a publisher. Perhaps Sol was with Gaines senior, I don't know. I wasn't into the business end at all. We were just hack artists barely out of school, good at one or two things, not too good overall. Krenkel did a lot of backgrounds for Ernie Bache and I, pencilled some pages and things. He was great with machinery. And he did a lot of crowd scenes, half naked girls in the backgrounds, but a very slow worker and a constant complainer about his lack of speed. Later on he did some illustrations for me in science fiction magazines. I was acting as his agent for a while trying to get him work. A good friend but a guy who never got out much in public, seemed completely antisocial, went barefoot on New York streets in the summer, and so on. I worked with him quite a bit, but at that time he wasn't doing too much on his own.

At one point when comics were going good we formed an organization called SOCBI -- Society of Comic Book Illustrators. Bernard Krigstein, who helped organize it, was our first president. Gil Kane came to the meetings. I was treasurer as I remember, we were trying to get bylaws for payment and such, but many of the bigger artists wouldn't join. We were a guild and we thought it would do some good for comics. Then, once four out of five comics folded, the organization also folded. We had some good meetings. I think it was the first time comic book artists got together for something like this.

I got out of art completely around the middle fifties, and the closest I got back into comics again was when I was living in Europe in 1959 and met Dan Barry. I started writing the FLASH GORDON daily and Sunday newspaper strip for him. I didn't do any drawing, just a lot of sketches of machinery, robots and rockets. Dan's a fantastic draftsman, but he didn't know a thing about science fiction so he followed my designs on the nuts and bolts things for the strip. I wrote the whole damn thing, ten years of it.

And I wrote what I thought was a good newspaper strip which never sold, drawn by Ric Estrada, a Cuban artist. He lived in Denmark when we were there around 1960 or '61. Nice loose style, a very good artist. But for the life of me, sorry, I can't remember what we'd called the feature. Then when I was living in Eng-

HOW MANY OF US HAVE HAD DREAMS, SO REAL, THAT WE AWAKE WITH A START AND ARE SURPRISED TO FIND WE WERE ONLY DREAMING? ARE YOUR DREAMS LIFE-LIKE? HOW DO YOU KNOW EVEN AT THIS VERY INSTANT THAT YOU ARE NOT DREAMING?! WHAT YOU THINK YOU ARE DOING RIGHT NOW MAY BE ONLY A DREAM... A FIGMENT OF YOUR IMAGINATION!
THIS WAS THE PARADOX FACING ARTHUR BRISTOL! WAS HE AWAKE OR WAS HE DREAMING? WHAT DID HE FIND AT THE END OF HIS...
DREAM OF DOOM
WHUFF! MUST HAVE DOZED OFF! BRR! WHAT A DREAM!
NOW JUST RELAX, MR. BRISTOL. DR. FROYD WILL BE IN TO INTERVIEW YOU IN A MOMENT!
GOOD LORD! WHEN WILL THIS END? IS THIS REALLY HAPPENING TO ME OR IS IT A DREAM? HOW LONG WILL I HAVE TO GO ON LIKE THIS BEFORE I FIND OUT WHERE I AM?
WELL, MR. BRISTOL, IF YOU'RE RELAXED, TELL ME YOUR STORY! YOU DON'T HAVE TO RUSH! JUST TAKE YOUR TIME!
I... I HARDLY KNOW WHERE TO BEGIN! I GUESS THERE JUST ISN'T ANY BEGINNING!
A PSYCHO-SCIENCE SUSPENSTORY!

WEIRD SCIENCE #12 1950

THE WORLD WAS MENACED WHILE THE GREATEST SCIENTIFIC MINDS OF THE CENTURY FRANTICALLY SOUGHT THE ANSWER TO THE MYSTERIOUS...
MACHINE from NOWHERE
BUT WHAT'S HAPPENING, PROFESSOR?
NOW I'VE SEEN IT WORK... AND I STILL DON'T KNOW WHAT IT IS, OR WHAT IT'S DOING! I DON'T KNOW!
IT WAS A COLD, SNOWY EVENING IN JANUARY WHEN PROFESSOR DONALSON FIRST FACED THIS BEWILDERING PROBLEM...
WHEN I GOT YOUR MESSAGE I WANTED TO COME RIGHT OVER, BUT I HAD A CLASS TONIGHT! I CAME AS SOON AS I COULD!
COME IN, PROFESSOR! I'M GLAD YOU MADE IT... I NEED YOUR HELP BADLY!
YOU SAID YOU HAD SOMETHING STRANGE... SOMETHING WEIRD TO SHOW ME!
IT DOESN'T LOOK WEIRD, PROFESSOR DONALSON! BUT WHAT CAUSED IT HAS GOT ME STUMPED! BUT I SEE I'M JUST CONFUSING YOU! LET ME SHOW YOU!
HARRISON

WEIRD SCIENCE #14 1950

land I wrote a few English black & white comics like RICK RANDOM, SPACE DETECTIVE, a nicely done science fiction comic with good artwork.

Who are some of your favorite artists in the pulp and comics field?

Henry Sharp is one. Worked in Chicago, was a great advertising artist doing work for a big firm that paid very well for advertising comics, a couple of hundred bucks for just two or three panels. Then he came to New York and did GI JOE COMICS for a while when Howard Brown was editing for Ziff-Davis. Ziff-Davis jumped into comics from pulp magazines and they lost a bundle, and one of their biggest losses was on GI JOE. They were badly advised on page rates, they wanted to do good work but they paid too much for it -- fifty to sixty dollars a page when everyone else was paying twenty-five or thirty -- and it got to be very uneconomical for them. I think Henry did almost all the GI JOEs. When he first came to New York he was very uptight about doing comics. When he did an original he made a sketch and if he didn't like a part of it he cut it out, pasted in a piece of paper, and redid it. He was trying to do comics that way, and I had to convince him you had to go about it differently to make any money at it. Finally he did, and got to doing GI JOE by just pencilling in the head and hands with the rest just stick-figured, then drawing directly with a brush everything else. Like Krenkel, he was a very facile artist. Later he got out of art entirely. If you saw the tv series WILD WILD WEST, he was the production director and script editor on it, also designing the fancy machines and gadgets they used in the show.

Who wrote the GI JOEs?

I think it was somebody who was nobody, very bad scripts like all the others at the time. It was a crime to be a writer in the late forties and early fifties. I did an article for WRITERS DIGEST during that period about how the artists were proud to sign their work, while the writers were always ashamed, feeling they were prostituting their talents. A few good ones like Bruce Elliott and Alfred Bester would go through comics on the sly. The people who stayed with comics were terrible, creepy hacks, most all basically low level writers who couldn't make it anywhere else.

How would you rate Al Feldstein as a comics writer?

Adequate. Comics are very hard to write well. You have to be visual. Al was good at it because he was also an artist. Most of the writing is incredibly bad because not enough of the people who write them know anything about drawing and staging. We used to have these problems in romance comics where all that ever happened was car accidents, that's the most action you ever got. They were always driving around in cars and talking. I had one script where it was a nine-panel page and a couple in the car for the whole nine panels and the guy was talking first in every single panel. I made it an English sports car so I could reverse it and get him on the left, looking at the couple in a front view, otherwise the balloons' tails would have to be crossed with him talking first.

Then I had one war comic, a perfect example of crummy writing. An American in a tank firing a machine gun at a Nazi plane diving at him, both with facial features described in detail, the German yelling "DIE, AMERICAN SCHWEINHUNDT!" while the GI in the tank was answering back "TRY IT, KRAUT, I'LL BLOW YOU OUT OF THE AIR!" What do you do with that? According to the writer you'd have to make it a full size tank and a full size plane, two feet apart, shouting at each other.

Romance was the worst. Depending on how much we wanted to draw, or maybe if we wanted to do some real good artwork for a sample, Wally and I would cut out three-fourths of the captions and dialogue and no one ever missed it. The daughter of the publisher would write these scripts with

BORIS PETAJA WAS SKILLED IN THE TRICKS OF ANCIENT AND MODERN MAGIC. HIS HANDS MOVED AND HIS VOICE CALLED ON THE SPIRITS TO AID HIM. DEEP DOWN IN HIS BRAIN, SOMETHING STIRRED AND WHISPERED, THAT HIS MAGIC WAS NOT FAKED...BUT REAL! AND BROODING, BORIS PETAJA BECAME...
THE MAD MAGICIAN
AN ADVENTURE IN HORROR
AS HE BOWED TO THE APPLAUSE OF A CHEERING AUDIENCE, THE MAGICIAN SMILED COLDLY TO HIMSELF...
FOOLS! IF THEY ONLY KNEW THAT WHAT THEY THINK IS TRICKERY CAN BE DONE JUST AS WELL WITHOUT STAGE PROPS!
I SHALL PROVE IT TO THE WORLD...I, BORIS PETAJA! TONIGHT I WILL SAW A MAN IN TWO...AND THEN PUT HIM TOGETHER AGAIN...WITH NO FALSE-BOTTOMED CABINET TO HELP ME!
STAGE ENTRANCE
WOOD HARRISON

HAUNT OF FEAR #15 1950

MY NAME IS WALTER MALLORY. I AM AN ENGLISHMAN, AND UNTIL RECENTLY, THOUGHT MYSELF PERFECTLY SANE AND NORMAL. AND THEN, WHEN THOSE HORRIBLE CHANGES CAME OVER MY BODY, WHEN MY BLOOD HUNGERED TO KILL AND RAVEN IN THE FULL OF THE MOON, I BECAME PART OF...
The WEREWOLF Legend
ANOTHER SUSPENSTORY FROM THE VAULT OF HORROR!
IT BEGAN IN A DEEP, DENSE WOOD, JUST OUTSIDE MALLORY DENE, CLOSE TO THE MOORS OF DEVON. I WAS NOT MYSELF! I WAS SOME SHAGGY, HAIRY MONSTER...
MOON...MAKING MY BLOOD BOIL! MAKING ME...HUNGRY! I AM NO MAN...NOT ANYMORE! I AM...A BEAST!
AH... SOMEONE APPROACHES!
WOOD HARRISON
1

VAULT OF HORROR #12 1950

endless dialogue, others were written by secretaries in the office, very bad, with no reality, no motion. We would change anything and no one would know it. We'd letter very big to fill up panels, showing only faces. One of the curses of comics until recently was that kind of bad writing. And Bill Gaines, though he pretended not to be in on the writing, really was a very shrewd guy who had some limited success with his comics because he had good scripts to begin with, and good editors working their artists very hard. Except for EC, all those comics had art a hundred times better than the writing all the time.

Did you do any art or writing for pulp magazines in the late forties?

Not until the fifties. I did some illustrating for a magazine Damon Knight was editing, WORLDS BEYOND, and MARVEL STORIES as well. As a writer I sold my first story to WORLDS BEYOND, appearing in its third issue. I knew all the writers as friends because I was a big fan of science fiction. They knew me as Harry the artist. I would go to parties, get around a lot, that was how I first got into illustrating and writing for science fiction magazines. I started writing more and more after that. It overlapped a little with comics.

Would you say you liked working in comics?

Well, I enjoyed the art. The best example of who really liked it was Wally, whose ambition was to be the best artist in comics, and in a way maybe he made that. He wanted to be in comics, and stayed in comics. The only good part of comics in those days was the artists, while the writer had the bum's job for the most part.

Did you ever think of comics as offering a certain amount of challenge?

In the beginning, as a twenty-year old meathead right out of the army, I wanted to be an artist, this was my ambition. I studied easel painting and wasn't very good at it. Maybe I would have gotten better, but I never went along that far with it. I studied comic art in school and needed money, so I started doing comics. I made money at it, I got to be a fast hack in comics. But eventually I saw what was happening with comics, and I'm glad I got out when I did because most of the artists who stayed got trapped in it. The manual labor is intense. They all have furnished basements almost like dungeons. They work twelve or fourteen hours a day, seven days a week. And the thing in comics is, after a certain time, one or two years, you're using about ten percent of your mind, no more. The radio is playing and you pay more attention to it than what you're doing on the drawing board. Working with four others in the same room, one guy always played classical music, so a fringe benefit of being a comic artist was that I got a great grounding in classical music by sitting there and listening to it ten or twelve hours a day. But working in comics themselves offered a small return intellectually after a while. There was no real challenge.

Did you ever try to convince any of the editors or publishers to improve their product?

Only with Gaines on the science fiction comics because he'd never heard of sscience fiction. We kept bringing in magazines and making him read stories. For us there was more fun in the artwork, when we were young, enthusiastic and hard working, always trying to change our style, using new techniques that were coming in. Razor scratching for white highlights was some new, fantastic thing for us. We kept changing from brush to pen and experimenting. I should have done writing right away, but I'm glad I did so much artwork because the visual part of it is an important part of writing. I'm a far better writer than I ever was an artist. I was just one more guy turning out bad stuff. I got to be a very fast inker, using a number five brush, taking good care of it, washing it in soap and water. Mixed my own ink. Most of us got to a point where we wouldn't even need a ruler. During one period I was doing only inking, and after a while I couldn't draw at all. Everybody had a style and they did it over and over again, same as me. The best thing that happened to me was when most comics folded because I was editing at the time and I found I got much more satisfaction from it and writing. The goals were always there, only they switched from art to writing.

Bernard Krigstein was one of the few who tried to break away from the established way of doing comics.

DR. KILLMORE'S BIG DECISION
MORGUE
204
205
DR. KILL
CALLING DR. KILLMORE! CALLING DR. KILLMORE!
@*!#?!@?! AND I WAS JUST GETTING INTO THIS CASE... HELLO! DR. KILLMORE SPEAKING.
KILLMORE MY BOY! THIS IS DR. HEATHEN. HOW ARE THINGS OVER THERE?
MORGUE
PRETTY DEAD!

Yeah, a very bright guy. But he ran into a problem in starting to resist the standard way of doing things. EC's format was strict, with very little leeway for an artist to do anything different except for staging inside panels. We worked from house layouts. Krigstein was a frustrated writer and editor who wanted to overhaul his assignments to fit the image he'd constructed for them, which was not the way EC worked. He didn't like pre-set layouts or drawing only one picture where it was called for. He should have been an editor, or better yet, a publisher. Then he could have arranged things his way. It was unfortunate for him that he became interested in experimenting at a time when comic book publishers were least receptive to it. The last thing publishers wanted to do in 1955 was rock the boat any more than they already had. Krigstein was probably too good for comics. You shouldn't have to think too much when you're drawing. Comics are a very repetitive art. They have to be, graphically, to be turned out in quantity.

Jack Kirby, for instance, is a perfect guy for the field. Traditional, but with an explosive quality. He pioneered with Joe Simon the forced perspective technique, I'm sure the first guy in comics to do it. Now he's writing his own stuff, really believing in it, is very sincere about it, but I have to say his intellectual competence, his knowledge of science and mythology, is absolutely zero.

I'm told he invents his own mythology.

Great, but does he ever read anyone else's? I just can't see anything intellectually stimulating, interesting or arousing about his writing. His art does generate a sense of movement and adventure. In a sense Kirby is his own younger reader, minus any intellectual content. I only say this because I heard him talk. A grand draftsman, but everything he said about the content, ideas and theories in his work seemed to send me up the wall. By the time I left his lecture I was hanging from the ceiling. He doesn't know much of anything about anything, and more than that I cannot say. The greatest strength of Kirby is his visual technique. On a more interesting plane is Bob Clampett, who also spoke at the convention, a sweet, gentle guy who believes in the stuff he was doing with his Warners cartoons of the forties. He was his own reader, or audience, but a cut above Kirby because Clampett has no pretensions about some supposed high level of intellectual content. Great animation, stories, sound effects -- it all worked, because he controlled it. It's the same with comics, where one man works as both writer and artist. Milton Caniff's early TERRY and MALE CALL got the idea across, and did it well. Alex Raymond was a dropout intellectually, but he did extraordinarily well with his drawing in FLASH GORDON. The quality stuff in comics appears when authors are their own artists, one-man strips. Jules Feiffer is at his best when he's doing his own thing today, or when he did his one-page CLIFFORD strip in the SPIRIT sections, at his worst when he was trying to do typical comic book art like his one or two things for us at EC. Some artists just can't and shouldn't fit into a factory situation.

I watched the new factory come into existence. I watched DC destroy it. They would take good artists. DC was changing its style in the middle fifties and they would have artists with unique styles work on an assembly line basis to remove the uniqueness. One pencilled, one inked. Mechanical art, anyone could do it, it always looked the same. DC worked very hard to get this, it's what they wanted to fit the corporate image of their books. The publishers made the money, never passed it on to the artists.

TORMENTED
MY SISTER AND I WERE TWO GIRLS AGAINST THE WORLD! EVER SINCE WE WERE ORPHANED, DEE TRIED TO GIVE ME THE LOVE AND PROTECTION THAT OUR PARENTS WOULD HAVE GIVEN US.... BUT I WASN'T SATISFIED WITH THAT, NO, I WASN'T SATISFIED UNTIL I HAD STOLEN THE LOVE AND HAPPINESS THAT WERE RIGHTFULLY HERS!! THAT WAS THE DESIRE OF MY SPITEFUL HEART!
PAY, I LOVE YOU!
I DON'T CARE IF MY SISTER DOES SEE ME. HE'S MINE!
EVER SINCE OUR PARENTS DIED, DEE HAS WATCHED OVER ME LIKE A MOTHER. SOON I CAME TO EXPECT EVERYONE TO BOW TO MY WILL!
IF I CAN'T BE CAPTAIN, I WON'T PLAY, THEN YOU'LL BE SORRY!
GIRLS CAN'T BE CAPTAINS! WHOEVER HEARD OF A GIRL CAPTAIN?
OH, LIN, COME BACK AND PLAY!
I'LL COME BACK, IF I CAN BE CAPTAIN!
OKAY, THEN, YOU CAN BE CAPTAIN! GEE WHIZ! YOU ALWAYS GET YOUR WAY!

CAPTAIN SCIENCE
FROM THE SINISTER DARKNESS OF STELLAR SPACE COMES THE PLANET TO END ALL PLANETS THE "VAMPIRE" WORLD! THIS VAMPIRE-GLOBE, PEOPLED BY SWIRLING HEADS THAT NEVER DIE.. BEGINS TO FEED ON THE EARTH, GULPING IT IN HUGE CHUNKS JUST AS YOU'D BITE AND EAT AN APPLE! CAN CAPTAIN SCIENCE AIDED BY HIS LOYAL ASSISTANTS RIP AND LUANA DODGE AND DEFEAT THE ALL-ENSWIRLING DANGER? PREPARE FOR THE WAR OF TWO WORLDS AS THE EARTH AND CAPTAIN SCIENCE BATTLE THE PLUNDERING PLANET AND THE KING OF THE HUNGRY
"HEADS OF HORROR!"
HIDDEN DEEP IN THE NEW MEXICO MOUNTAINS IN HIS SECRET LABORATORY, CAPTAIN SCIENCE WHOSE EARTH NAME IS GORDON DANE IS READY FOR ACTION AS HE, RIP AND LUANA RECEIVE A WARNING MESSAGE FROM THE ROBOT "BRAIN"
ONCE MORE THE SWIRLING WORLD OF HORROR HEADS COMES TO DRINK UP EARTH BEWARE!
QUICK! TUNE IN THIS MENACE ON THE "SPACE AND TIME VIEWER"
THE TIME-VIEWER SPINS BACKWARDS.. AND EVER THE DAUNTLESS TRIO RECOIL FROM A HORRIBLE SIGHT!
UGGHH! I'VE NEVER SEEN ANYTHING LIKE THAT!
HOW CAN WE HOPE TO FIGHT THIS.. THIS THING?

One great thing about EC was they never tried to change artists' styles around. Kurtzman and Feldstein encouraged artists to develop their own styles, then whipped their asses well to keep them doing their best work within EC's house continuity. When the Code came in there were no more big comics, no more big money. Publishers like DC were getting greedy, sales were going down. Maybe it's now over the point of no return, a hunk of salami turned out by sausage factories.

Yet I think Kirby's work is still a one-man product.

It's a basic, simple strip and I guess basic, simple kids can like it. And I'm sure some adults like it as well. It's like Edgar Rice Burroughs, who's admired, loved and adored by twelve year olds and forty-eight year olds with twelve year old minds, and that's just about where Kirby is. The Burroughs "Dum Dum" is a good name for it. Once past thirteen or so I don't think you can really like Burroughs.

I've read only one or two of Burroughs' short stories, so I don't know much about him.

Well, don't read him now, because it's too late for you. He's tremendous for the first-reader of science fiction and fantasy, but it's pretty simple stuff. Good sense of color, action and motion. PRINCESS OF MARS is terrific in that area, but you have to grow up sometime. I was charmed to hear Kirby talk, interested in what he had to say about his work, but every statement he made was wrong, not a bit of his science was right.

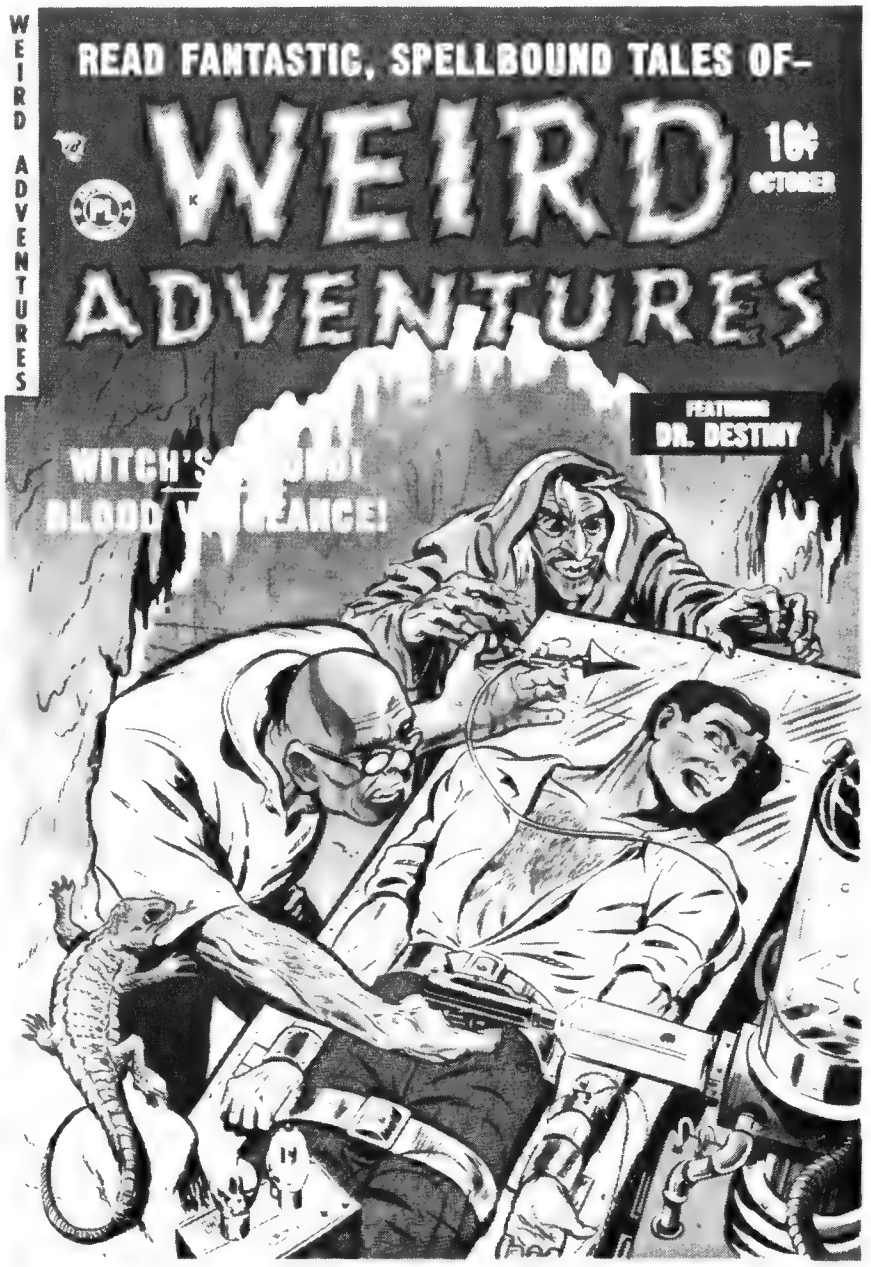
I don't think he claims to be a science fiction writer.

He doesn't, but everything that made reference to the real world was in error. If in science fiction you change reality then you must plot from that point afterward, which Kirby doesn't do. His basic errors put his stuff into the area of pure fantasy, but that's all right because kids and adults with limited ambition like it. It's not my dish, though, and it's not the dish of a lot of people. I've read plenty of Kirby. A love-hate relationship. I heard him talk, so I can truthfully say the intellectual content of his work is zero, fodder for twelve year olds, and that's it. But you can get conned by the beauty of the art, like going to a movie where something strongly visual is always happening and diverting your attention from the story. Science fiction it's not.

What do you think of science fiction comics as a field in itself? Why has it apparently never sold well?

The ECs never did but of course they tried a little bit different type of science fiction from the rest of the field. They weren't as pulp magazine adventure slanted. Probably they were too good. Things like PLANET COMICS, blood and thunder stuff, sold much better. The kind of modified science fiction that sells well in comics is Superman, Captain Marvel and The Flash. Action rather than ideas, like Kirby. And whatever ideas there are in them are usually physical basics. Zip, bang, boppo. The average comic book reader -- not the fan, not the serious student of the medium, not my mother -- but the average reader is either age eight or an adult with the IQ of a kid age eight. To have a big sale means they have to appeal mostly to those people, which EC never could do with their science fiction comics because they had little appeal to readers' baser instincts. Horror went to the basic instincts of almost everybody, so EC and others sold lots of horror. You need a broad, base market for almost anything. When the kid goes out there to buy, the super hero is what grabs him, the colorful action, images of lightning hitting Thor's hammer and such.

Charles Biro was probably the first



Bache and Harrison

EARTHA KITT'S **DIRTY** LINEN!

OUR GRAPEVINE

THE LOWDOWN ON

SEPIA, U.S.A.

25c VOL. 1, NO. 1

EXPOSED!
THE MEN BEHIND DIRTY RECORDS

IT'S BEING WHISPERED!
WILL THE MONEY SCANDALS RUIN ADAM CLAYTON POWELL?

THE INSIDE STORY!
WHAT REALLY KILLED "YARDBIRD" CHARLIE PARKER?

REVEALED!
HOMOSEXUALS: AMERICA'S NUMBER 1 SEX PROBLEM

THE LOWDOWN ON
WHY THEY HATE PUERTO RICANS

WHEN SARA VAUGHN'S LOVEY FACED A JAIL TERM

WHY THE GIANTS FEAR WILLIE'S WILD STREAK

A TRUE STORY! **THE MAN WHO HIT FOR $30,000**

to try breaking out of the kid's comic book market with his TOPS comic magazine in 1949.

Yeah, TOPS, the large size adult comic. I have it around here somewhere. It flopped after a couple of issues because the publisher, Lev Gleason, was running scared and didn't give it a chance. When returns on the first issue came in it was amazing how badly it sold, fifteen or eighteen percent at a time when the average comic was selling fifty to seventy-five percent of its pressrun. TOPS set a record for non-selling. Maybe it eventually would have gone, I have no idea. I doubt it. TOPS didn't have a mass basis for support, it was too radical a departure. Underground comics show how you can make a moderate success appealing to the base instincts in older readers, you get something dirty and nasty, pornographic, and you can sell some comics. Put a higher price on it with small distribution, enough to cover costs, and maybe you can make it there. I've seen some good creative stuff in undergrounds, too. Otherwise the field is left to the kids who support super heroes.

Then you don't think there's a mass market for adult science fiction in comic book form?

I really don't think so. I know Bantam Books tried it with some beautiful artwork in BLACKMARK, by Gil Kane, and it bombed. It was more fantasy adventure than science fiction, but the point was it was an attempt to make a quality adult comic.

It was in paperback format, though, and I'm talking about comic book or magazine format.

Same thing, isn't it? Pictures on a page, telling a story. But look at the comics all over the world and see what sells everywhere. The most popular comic in the world is probably THE PHANTOM. It's the type that really makes it, a guy with no eyeballs wearing a purple suit. Italian and Spanish comics are terrible stuff, fumettis, soap operas, romances like the ones we were doing in the forties, good art only occasionally, but they sell. Geographic logistics also enter into it. England is so small geographically that all the weekly and monthly newspapers sell all over England, where they don't need advertising so much, they make it on circulation alone. The same is true with comics there. Boys weeklies -- color and quality for the middle class, working class comics in black & white sold only in working class districts. Great stuff for the market. But here there's a distribution problem. There are maybe two thousand magazines published each month, while the average newsstand holds two or three hundred maximum, so they're competing for space and attention, just like paperbacks. People read less. If LIFE magazine goes under, you can't talk about comics carrying on in the same format. You're lucky if you can keep any magazine going today.

If it's true people want to read less, if they're becoming more visually oriented, maybe a good science fiction comic magazine could be successful.

It's still a form of reading where you have to go out and buy it, carry it home with you and turn the pages. The visually minded won't do that, they're home looking at the tube or going to movies. Plenty of time and money has been invested in it, and so far it hasn't been done. Story-telling action and humor is what goes in comics. In the early forties they were escapist fun, and everybody in the army would read them. Comics were built by the army. Every PX was loaded with comics. And ex-GIs were in the habit of reading them when the war was over, so you had some bonehead adults still buying them along with the kids. Comics were killed on television. They had an investigation on tv with Bill Gaines talking about the famous CRIME SUSPENSTORIES cover showing a severed head and an axe, very graphic and detailed, and they asked him if it wasn't in bad taste. They said it was terrible, undermining American youth, but Gaines answered that it was in good taste and that it could be worse. How could it be worse? "Well, it could show tendons and bone on the cut end." That was the end of that. And now you can watch Saturday morning stuff and find the same characters as in comic books except you don't have to turn pages, the characters move around, you get some color and action, really the same kind of thing only with less effort to be entertained. I watch it once in a while if I have a hangover or something. Some are quite good. But there's the difference. All magazines are dying now for that reason, less effort needed by audiences to absorb entertainment and information. Science fiction magazines are just about dead. In the forties and fifties there were fifty or sixty titles, now there are four or five. And they're all on the rocks except for ANALOG, which has a lot of readers who are engineers. Hardcover books underwrite magazine sales and paperbacks underwrite book sales. They're fighting a losing battle.

Henry Sharp

Once intellectuals start appreciating something, like comics, it's usually dead. I don't think you'll ever see anything as good in the future as you saw in the past. So maybe the collectors are right in going back and getting the old stuff because that's where the action was, the gay, happy, carefree stuff. When it was cheap to publish comics, and everyone was doing it. When Wally and I talked Gaines into doing really good science fiction comics we stole only the best stories, went to the classics and lifted plots and put them into comic format. The great stuff stays great. I'm afraid those days are never coming again. Now I see Marvel Comics is trying adaptations of stories by name science fiction writers, but I think it's too late. They're trying to do today what EC was doing over twenty years ago, and I doubt if it'll work out for them. It didn't go then, and I don't believe it can go now.

I wonder if the post-war and early fifties McCarthy era had anything to do with EC and the other horror comics being killed off, since the rise and fall of EC parallels almost exactly the rise and fall of McCarthy himself if you take his career from when he and EC started in the late forties to the middle fifties when they both ran out of gas. Chart the two on a graph, and they follow the same arc.

Come to think of it, if it had anything to do with it, it was the feeling of oppression of those times generated by McCarthy. People were running frightened. The investigations brought on by old Doc Wertham, a really way-out nut. I debated him on a platform one time when he'd gone to lecture at a women's society. A friend of mine, Hans Santesson, took me along. There were questions from the floor, and I had a few for him that got us into a big argument. Some really mad stuff, the general timbre of the lecture being to suppress comic books. It was during this era of oppressive thinking that distributors started running scared. They just tore the covers off every single horror and crime comic and sent them back. Print two hundred thousand and get two hundred thousand back and you won't publish the next month. This is what happened. Distributors themselves are the life and death of any magazine in this country, particularly comics which don't get much mail order sales. Distributors were responsible for it, they killed comics out of fright. There was no real national legislation ever, just fear.

I think McCarthy's career may have had some bearing on it. The political atmosphere of the times does affect the arts very much. For instance, I was a comedian in the early sixties and doing pretty well until Kennedy got elected, when all of a sudden comedians couldn't get work. Mort Sahl started to go crazy and couldn't get gigs, Lenny Bruce started on his way to death, and other comedians of that type were out of work. Now with Nixon we've got a lot of the stuff I saw in the Eisenhower times, getting back into folk singers and balladeers. And science fiction movies are back, which we haven't seen a lot of since the Eisenhower fifties.

The times echo the times. Presidents are elected for certain reasons. Right now we're shut in from the rest of the world by our own narrow minded, closed-in way. There's a Socialist president in Germany, a Socialist just got elected in New Zealand and Australia. We'll go on for the next four years being exploited by big capitalism. But most people like it because they voted Dicky in by a big majority which means they like that kind of action. They don't care how much the public is being cheated as long as they have their own bag going. Two items touching each other in the paper today: "Second Week in Vietnam, No Americans Killed" and underneath it, "Heaviest Raids on North Vietnam." Who cares who kills slopes? We have our own little thing going. I'm sure it's reflected in the underground press and the way it's reacting. Ninety-five percent of the press is for Nixon, but ninety-five percent of the people aren't if you count all the groups like Chicanos, blacks, artists and young people who don't want to support the military. These people don't have a mouthpiece so they go with the underground press.

Maybe that's where you can sell comics too if you're talking about problems of distribution and limited runs, since you're making a small comic if you're in undergrounds and have a tighter idea of what a market could be. For instance, black movies are making money. They've got a group that's very definable and they're telling that group what it wants to hear and see. If there's a hope for comics to make a comeback on a quality level it's going to be because there's a very well chosen target for it.

It's like the hippies and would-be hippies reacting to EASY RIDER, which isn't a particularly great picture but it came along at the right time

with the right message for a certain audience and it hit a lot of truths about the kind of things that go on year after year.

Even it seems dated now, though it's only three or four years old.

It's already a nostalgia piece, like flower power and Haight-Ashbury. But it spoke in public for a lot of people in this country where a good number feel disenfranchised. The whole new life style can't get through, so it comes out in many different ways in cinema, books, underground comics and underground press.

I wonder if the average underground comic could be serious competition to establishment comics if they could get that same kind of good national distribution.

Maybe, but that's where the problem comes in. Today you couldn't get the distribution. Mr. White has to win, clear and clean, and if you do get it out there they'd just close it down and send it back. They don't want it now. People want it all censured, tied up neat and tight. There's nothing at all democratic about it, it's the same as with the death of horror and crime comics.

Even PLAYBOY, a sure seller, had some trouble with distribution at one point. When they first started showing pubic hair distributors said they weren't going to touch the magazine. PLAYBOY had the right to do everything it fought for and then for a while couldn't use it.

Then PENTHOUSE came along and got PLAYBOY to loosen up. Also some loosening up of distributors. PLAYBOY is now sold in some supermarkets along with TIME and COSMOPOLITAN. But then when you look at PLAYBOY and its editorial stance, it's very establishment most of the way. All the real interest is in titillation, fellatio gags and nude girls. Its "Heard Any Good Ones Lately?" joke page goes over big with the navy mentality here in San Diego, who'd be the first ones to crunch a longhair over the head for wearing a Viet Cong patch on his shirt.

PLAYBOY has to keep its buyers from the class of '57.

Yeah. And it's not so different with establishment comics which have to keep their buyers from the class of '67, 1970s comics getting by on lines of thought that grew out of the '60s. Look at DC's PREZ, about a teenage president of the USA -- right out of WILD IN THE STREETS, a 1960s movie. Comics are always several years behind the times. Especially at DC.

Most people think of the ECs as growing out of the early fifties, but they were really a post-war forties development. The atom bomb mushroom cloud over Hiroshima could aptly have been shaped like EC's logo as a vision of things to come.

It's hard to argue the point of what would have gone and what would not have gone at that time. Some hit it wrong, some hit it right, like a shot in the dark. Biro failed with TOPS which tried to uplift the medium to adult level. The world always wants crap. Once you got into the EC horror thing, each comic was more vulgar than the one before it. The nastier it got the better it sold. At first a lot of it was underground in a way, distributors didn't look at the stuff that much in the beginning, neither did parents and civic groups. It sneaked in. But as soon as attention was drawn to it in the media, people screamed their heads off. As long as you're doing it quietly in your own little corner you can get away with it. I don't think it was so much the times that gave birth to EC and the others but the times did tie in with it in the ease with which it was killed -- the era of restriction, seeing Commies under every bed. Even today, going to Britain and passing through customs, they question you about bringing alcohol, tobacco and horror comics into the country. Among all the awful, poisonous things in the world are horror comics.

With only a few exceptions science fiction movies have basically been along the lines of science fiction comic books and pulp magazines.

The movies have been bad because movie people will not recognize the fact that science fiction is a different field altogether. They get the same dumb script writer who does mysteries and westerns to write science fiction. If you get the right people on it you'll get a good movie. H. G. Wells wrote his own script from his book on THINGS TO COME, and it was a great picture. Or you get Stanley Kubrick and Arthur C. Clarke together. 2001 for all its faults had a lot going for it. Kubrick got a great education in science fiction with 2001, so when he did CLOCKWORK ORANGE on his own it was a masterpiece where everything worked fine. I just went through this recently myself, with MGM making a movie from one of my books, MAKE ROOM! MAKE ROOM! They've changed almost everything, the title to SOYLENT GREEN, the story, and have put about two and a half million dollars into it, and I've fought them tooth and nail on it. They wouldn't let me do anything on the script. I don't think they've got the world's greatest script, changing a lot and losing some of the point of the book. The picture has a separate identity of its own, but the book is basically sound -- about the year 2000 in New York, a population theme, an overfilled world. They've used a script written by the guy who did SKYJACKED, and a good director in Richard Fleischer who did TORA TORA TORA, THE BOSTON STRANGLER, COMPULSION and 20,000 LEAGUES UNDER THE SEA. The lead is Charlton Heston, who's very fond of science fiction himself, Leigh Taylor-Young, Joseph Cotten, the late Edward G. Robinson, Chuck Connors and Steven Young. Some good people in it, and it really works as a fine action picture that gets my basic themes across on its own terms.

But the story is not your original story?

It is and it isn't. They did take my New York City and set the story there. They followed my lead characters for the most part, knocked out a lot, added a lot to it. The basic structure of this terribly depressing world is there. Everyone involved in the film was soon to be depressed by the story's premise and conditions, as they should be. It's true in that sense to the book. It's the first well-filmed picture to get into the world overpopulation and pollution theme, which is quite current now. People are thinking about it. The topical nature of the theme has overridden any weaknesses in the script. They've got about eight hundred extras at one point rushing around in the streets with riots and a lot of things happening, strong visual material, action and crowd scenes. And all the actors were really involved in the story. They thought it was an important thing, they put a lot of energy and feeling into it. But I still think the weakest link is having it written by a script writer who doesn't know anything about science fiction. One perfect example is where I set the book in the year 2000, well aware that popular language changes and that slang today will change in just two or three years. I'd invented about forty different, new slang words. Out of these forty words they ended up using exactly none in the film, after I pointed this out. They missed that element of science fiction. But there it is, so what can you do? Science fiction is a very special field of endeavor, but movie people always want to hedge their bets. Some people can write it and some can't. You can see this in many of the so - called science fiction books. The good stuff has a special smell and feel to it, while the other stuff is dumb, faked writing. Maybe ten or fifteen people are writing ninety percent of the good science fiction nowadays, and they get all the work they need. If you're a well accepted name in science fiction a new book will have the writer's name bigger than the title. People buy by author. It's hard for a new writer to break in, but once you start selling you're home free. Some people, not many, can almost make a living at it now.

Hollywood has never used the science fiction writer much whether his book was the basis of the picture or not.

Very few, if any. DESTINATION MOON was a pretty solid picture, a nuts and bolts movie with a simplistic plot, but hoked up from the Robert Heinlein novel they based it on. He hated everything about it. I think they paid him four or five hundred dollars outright fee for it, and

that's all he got. The same thing happened with Harry Bates' FAREWELL TO THE MASTER, which they made into THE DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL--a flat fee of four hundred dollars for movie rights. It didn't turn out badly, but it was a different picture altogether from the book.

Ray Bradbury's stories especially have always suffered in their movie versions.

Talk to Ray and he'll give you a horror story about every picture. I think he hates them all, how badly they've been done, including one that's been on the shelf for a couple of years waiting for release called PICASSO SUMMER. The one he dislikes the least is FAHRENHEIT 451. Of all the movies they've done I'd say it's the one closest to the book.

I think Kurt Vonnegut got a fair shake with SLAUGHTERHOUSE FIVE.

It's bar none the closest to the novel of any of the movies taken from novels. I hear he's satisfied with it. This class I have with thirteen students, who are all teachers, we saw it not long ago and agreed it was a good translation. I hope there's a trend coming up there. SLAUGHTERHOUSE FIVE is not hard core or classic science fiction, but as fringe science fiction it was well done insofar as mood and feeling of the book goes. That's where they run into trouble with Bradbury's stuff. FAHRENHEIT 451 was true to the book in its basic plot, except they failed to generate any of the Bradbury feeling. Maybe his prose can't be transferred intact to a visual medium.

Those EC comic book adaptations of his stories, I don't think even one was a complete success. Most of them missed by a mile -- nice try, but no cigar.

You either read his stuff or have him read it aloud. If he reads it aloud it has the added edge of his voice in the word inflection, and there it comes off great. But I don't think it can be easily translated to stage plays or the screen in dramatized form. It's a particular type that you have to read or hear as a poetic reading, narrated by an actor or the author. That's its strength. But when you show it, you can lose it. When you read, it's all internal -- a pleasure that people who watch only tv have lost, and to an extent, people who read comics have lost. Writing forces you to generate your fictional images internally, where the reader must supply the missing ingredient. If a writer can trick you into doing that, you have bigger and better pictures than you would get if visually translated for you by someone else. With tv and comic books it's all done for you, often missing the mark. Then if you read a movie review before seeing a picture, the process reverses itself and goes full circle -- reading one critic's description of something visual, where it's turned back from one medium into another. I've seen a movie after reading a review and thought the critic must have seen some entirely different picture. And, of course, he did. The only way to get around it would be to have a half million different versions of the same movie for everybody's mind. The pleasure of a screen play is revealed in the visuals when you get a genius type like Orson Welles who can create whole imagery that forms its own story content. A tremendous talent can take a book and make it work even better as a movie.

Mentioning THINGS TO COME, the director on that was William Cameron Menzies who was the production designer on GONE WITH THE WIND. There's a guy who knew his pictures.

I'm sure the design on THINGS TO COME wasn't H. G. Wells' own. It was pure visual, a little dated now but the visual effects are still good. Half the success of the thing was its design, but it also started with a good script, Wells' own, with top British actors like Ralph Richardson and Cedric Hardwick to give it dramatic presence. You have to have a well written script apart from hot-shot direction, and Hollywood has not faced that fact yet.

What about some other science fiction movies?

THE DAY THE EARTH CAUGHT FIRE was a very good one, a nice, realistic picture. Some of George Pal's were fine, made on a different level as popular B pictures. His films were done on a lower budget than they should have been, perhaps, cheating a little on the writing and acting end in favor of using most of the money on special effects. THE OMEGA MAN had some good direction, and the visual stuff was nice, but they took a fairly good book and made a dumb movie. The original story is about vampires, classic ones, and in the whole picture the idea of vampires is never mentioned. They never told you what the thing was about.

The better science fiction films are stuck in between true science fiction and fringe, like THE WAR GAME where the Germans win the war in England. British television commissioned Peter Watkins to do it, then they wouldn't allow it to be released on British tv because it was too strong for them. BATTLE OF CULLODEN was a fantastic job, a YOU ARE THERE sort of thing, one man's idea done in perfectly realized terms. And a Czech picture called IKARIUS - XB with a lovely concept, very funny and well done, where they invented some way-out dance number a bit like medieval court dance. That showed some really good thinking.

But most of the stuff at Trieste is junk, especially from the west, while from the east, where they have so few outlets, they get better stuff because they *have* to do better in order to survive. Fine Czech, Russian and Polish films. I went a couple of times as a judge. You see bits and pieces here and there, but for an exceptional film you need overall continuity. You have to have someone like Kubrick overseeing everything, as in CLOCKWORK ORANGE, to keep a tight hold on it. We do great westerns in this country, SHANE, BAD DAY AT BLACK ROCK, RED RIVER, GIANT. And things like DIRTY HARRY, THE FRENCH CONNECTION, Sam Peckinpah's movies, STRAW DOGS, action and suspense, violence, done in this country so well for so many years, where all the pieces meet. But we have no history or continuity whatsoever in decent science fiction. The milieu isn't there to produce it. Hopefully we're getting it now. The good thing about 2001 is that it made a lot of money, so it loosened things up a bit in trying more science fiction themes. Unfortunately, producers then start running around talking about CREATURE FROM THE BLACK LAGOON again as their idea of science fiction. They missed the message in 2001's success. We've got to get good science fiction writers involved somewhere along the line to even things up.

Seems like all the older science fiction movies had more horror and serial action than anything else.

The action and horror elements were always there. Yeah. Hollywood had a feel for it, part of it is a reflection of the culture, it's what sold it. Short on ideas, long on horror action, traditionally the difference between what goes and what doesn't. In Britain and Russia you can be good and be a science fiction writer. Here you can't be good and be a science fiction writer. On SLAUGHTERHOUSE FIVE's book jacket -- "This is Not Science Fiction," as though the publisher wants to get himself off the hook. No book labeled science fiction ever got on the best seller list in this country. By and large it's been the same with movies. They've never been the avant garde intellectual thought in this country before, and I don't think they're going to be now until qualified writers are brought in. Producers are still basically following the same Flash Gordon and Buck Rogers formula.

Don't get me wrong, I love Flash Gordon and Buck Rogers. The things had terrific life to them, colorful action, motion and imagery. The Clay Men sequences were great. As serials made for kids they seem amateurish to us today, but people really loved them, with the rocket ships coasting along on wires, exhaust floating straight up like a cigarette butt. And the old Gene Autry serial, PHANTOM EMPIRE, had some great stuff in it, strong imagery. We were so naive then they could get away with it and sneak in the feeling of quality through visuals and motion with only a pulp magazine story to string everything along on.

INVASION OF THE BODY SNATCHERS was a good one, a nice tight horror plot,

FLASH GORDON SEQUENCE SATELLITE WEEK 7 RELEASE DATE 2/6/62 by DAN BARRY

REGULATION 8C-23 FORBIDS MOLESTING CONSTRUCTION ROBOTS...
HOW DO YOU SHUT THIS THING UP?
THAT VOICE IS DRIVING ME CRAZY!!
PENALTY FOR DESTR... KRKKKPFT...
OMIGOSH!!
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Dan Barry
2/6

FLASH GORDON SEQUENCE SATELLITE WEEK 10 RELEASE DATE 3/1/62 by DAN BARRY

VALVE'S... STICKING
FLASH! BIF! GET OUT! THAT PIPE'S GOING TO BLOW!
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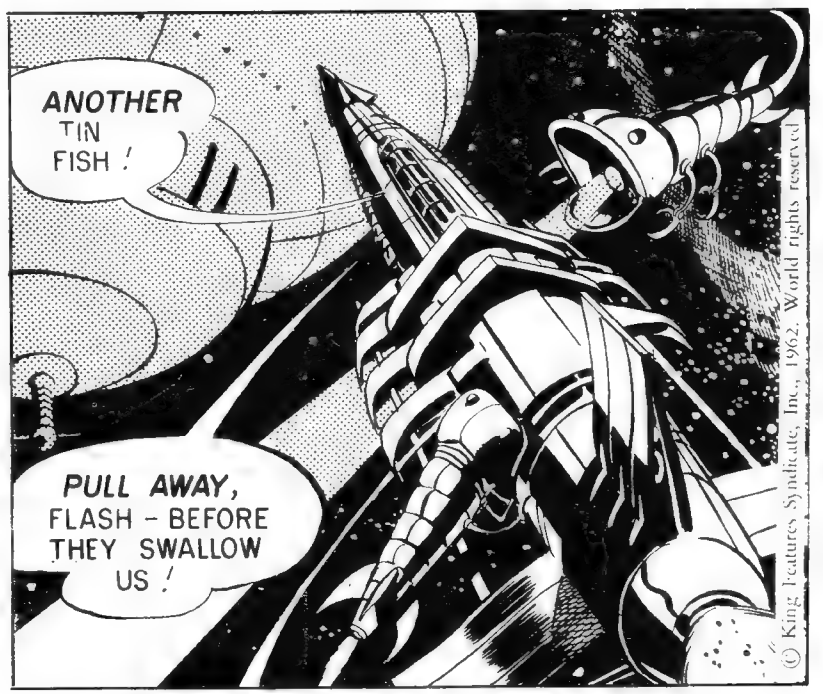
Dan Barry
3/1

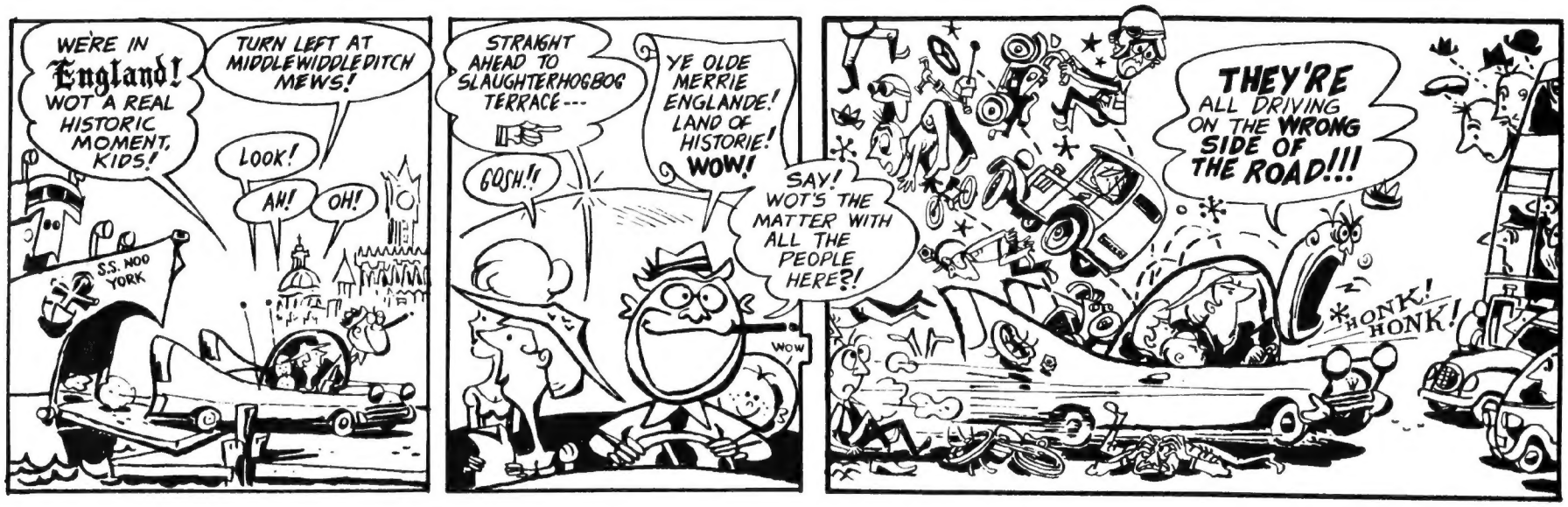
FLASH GORDON SEQUENCE SATELLITE WEEK 11 RELEASE DATE 3/6/62 by DAN BARRY

FLASH GORDON SEQUENCE ROBOT MOON WEEK 1 RELEASE DATE 12/21/62 by DAN BARRY



TUGBOATS, I'D GUESS ! THEY'RE BRINGING US ABOARD THE SATELLITE !
BALLPOINT - TH' LITTLE RAT ! SOLD US OUT TO TH' SKORPI ! AN' TO TH' SKORPI – NOBODY IS A FRIEND !
Dan Barry 12/21

Harrison and Estrada


WE'RE IN England! WOT A REAL HISTORIC MOMENT, KIDS!
TURN LEFT AT MIDDLEWIDDLEDITCH MEWS!
LOOK!
AH!
OH!
S.S. NOO YORK
STRAIGHT AHEAD TO SLAUGHTERHOGBOG TERRACE---
YE OLDE MERRIE ENGLANDE! LAND OF HISTORIE! WOW!
GOSH!!
SAY! WOT'S THE MATTER WITH ALL THE PEOPLE HERE?!
WOW!
THEY'RE ALL DRIVING ON THE WRONG SIDE OF THE ROAD!!!
HONK! HONK!

very cheaply done but making a strong impact, definitely one of the best things Hollywood did in science fiction...

...with no monsters or rocket ships in it, just bits of horror like when they killed the pod people in the greenhouse with pitchforks...

...really a good wholesome, juicy, sordid science fiction idea projected into an action plot with a social theme underneath, a great example of not compromising an idea for the horror and action elements.

What organized Hollywood can't face is that the good stuff nowadays is being done by independents, where a couple of guys can borrow a few hundred thousand dollars and gross several million, as NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD has done. Science fiction films should take a tip from musicals like CABARET and integrate their themes with stronger character development, less emphasis on nuts and bolts aspects. With musicals you can't just have a couple of people tap dancing out and singing today, you've got to do something with it. Science fiction pictures must also do something more with their themes. Just using a big name won't work, and certain pictures that try it are doomed to fail before they start. Science fiction people with good production talent and great effects could make exceptional films, but basic errors on science in a script can ruin the whole thing. These clowns who've been writing science fiction movies just don't have a clue on what they should do, where they should begin. You get talented people in special effects, as in SILENT RUNNING, and you make the world's dumbest picture. They never bothered to have so much as a graduate chemistry student review their script. A physics student in high school could correct that script and make it better, since its plot now turns on a basic error of science. In that sense SILENT RUNNING is not so very different from the Flash Gordon serials.

There's a class of movie coming out now I call Big TV...

...made for quick theatrical release then going directly to television a couple of years later. Basically made-for-tv movies which hit theaters first, made by producers hedging their bets again by making them for theatrical and television consumption at the same time. When you talk about movies or tv the first word you mention is budget, before script, actors and director. It's all that counts. You're talking about making an artwork out of a commercial medium. Go twenty minutes over schedule and you're sweating your job. Watching them shoot SOYLENT GREEN, they worked every bit they could get from this one outdoor set because it was costing them twelve thousand dollars a day. You don't mess around, you follow the goal to make a certain level of picture within a certain budget. The only way art gets back in is through the director, cameraman and writer if they get the right ones and stay with them all the way. Sometimes art creeps in between the layers of collaboration. But ninety-nine percent of any movie made has to be mechanical because commerce still runs too much of the show, with very few original movies breaking through. Producers still follow each other around in circles, looking no further than whatever trend is going on at the time. Right now it's violence and sex. Black movies. A few years ago it was dope and bikers, in the fifties monster and flying saucer pictures. Anyone remember flying saucers?

What fascinates me about flying saucers isn't whether they exist or not, but saucer mania of the late forties and early fifties when it was a national fad. I think the flying saucer craze was nothing more than another reflection of the McCarthy era.

If you had a bad case of pimples in 1952 would you blame that on McCarthy too?

I'm just saying there seems to be more than a coincidental connection between the two, since saucer mania has never been as strong as it was during that period. Visually it was stated perfectly in those scenes of saucers over the White House, symbolizing foreigners out to take us over.

Well, the times gave saucer people a job, like McCarthy. There were two

CIVILIZED, THAT'S WOT! LEGAL TO SMOKE IN THE UNDERGROUND!
NONE OF THAT MONTH-IN-JAIL STUFF LIKE IN NEW YORK!
LIGHT ME UP A STOGY-- AHHHHH!!!
BE A MAN!
YOU KNOW--- LIKE YOU BEEN SAYING... MOM...
I THINK I'LL GIVE UP SMOKING!!

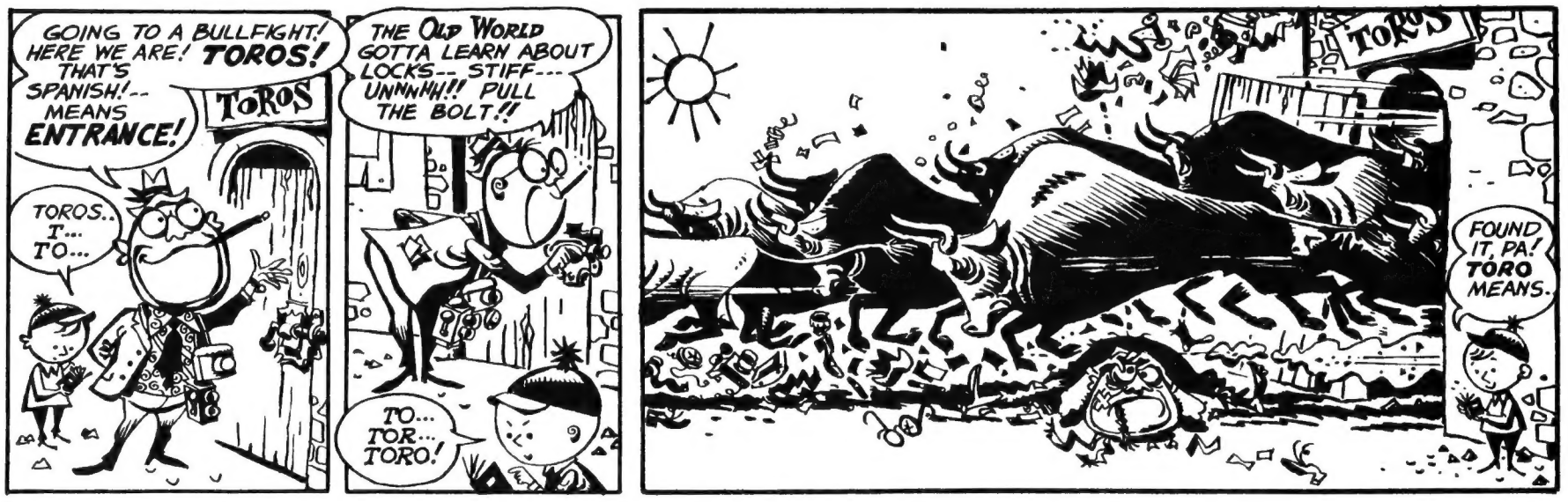
PEOPLE SAID WE'D OVEREAT IN GERMANY!
NONSENSE, MOM!
NATIONAL STEREOTYPES! DON'T BELIEVE IT! THIS IS JUST GOOD FOOD!!
I'EM FULL!!
JUST RIGHT! THE OLD BREAD BASKET IS PLEASANTLY PLUMP!
DER MAIN COURSE, MEIN HERR!!

kinds, the contactees and the reporters. The contactee is the way-out looney who's talked to Venusian space men. The reporters did all the hard work, and what they got out of it, I guess, is that there are unexplained phenomena in our atmosphere, unidentified flying objects. Period. The contactees, though, were always on our side. They were better than us, they were going to show us the way to peace and salvation, save us from the atom bomb and self-annihilation.

I was in grammar school then and I can remember every week having to get under my desk, covering the back of my neck and closing my eyes tightly, putting my elbows a certain way to keep the shattering glass from getting up under me. We were drilled on how we were going to die.

We tried to forget about that. We forced it out of our minds because of this national paranoia we have that started with the cold war, Commies under our beds who were going to eat us alive. Saucer stories and civil defense drills were means to our salvation. It was expressed in many different ways. You could see it at the same time in Dianetics, coming up during the late forties, since changed to Scientology, L. Ron Hubbard's invention. And it was the time when Reich orgone therapy was big. Pat theories, one big ball of wax, and boom, we're all cured. We've lost church going. The church no longer has any viable use in the world. We may have hell on earth, but we're going to be saved in heaven--it doesn't work any more. We're running in eight different directions here. This country is so damn big we find it hard to get national unity, that's what it amounts to, it's not a matter of class but a matter of geography. We're not just one country, we're a lot of different countries. We're united by some things. Kill the slopes, vote for Dicky, get high on grass, go to movies, football. We have a set of rules that work differently from the rest of the world.

YOUR OLD PA IS QUITE A LINGUIST, KIDS! I READ THE WHOLE BOOK! LISTEN!!
¡¿DONDE YOU GOTTA CUADRAZO FORA ME Y LOS KIDDIES?!
SOUVENIR
SPEAK SPANISH IN 10 MIN.
Que tipo raro, Lope! Griego!!
(TRANSLATION)
THIS IS A STRANGE ONE, LOPE! A GREEK!
HOTEL MEJICO
Not Greek-- they're FINNS! I can tell by the eyes!!
The eyes! of course! Sure proof they're SERBO-CROATIANS!
a chance-- just maybe--- it speaks English!!
WOULD YOU LIKE A ROOM, SEÑOR?
SEE! UNDERSTOOD EVERY WORD I SAID!!
LIKE A NATIVE!
BOY!


GOING TO A BULLFIGHT! HERE WE ARE! TOROS! THAT'S SPANISH!-- MEANS ENTRANCE!
TOROS
TOROS.. T... TO...
THE OLD WORLD GOTTA LEARN ABOUT LOCKS-- STIFF--- UNNNHH!! PULL THE BOLT!!
TO... TOR... TORO!
TOROS
FOUND IT, PA! TORO MEANS..

THE HYDRA CLUB · DRAWN FOR MARVEL SCIENCE FICTION, 1951

1. Lois Miles Gillespie
2. H. Beam Piper
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4. Judith Merrill Pohl
5. Frederik Pohl
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7. Richard Wilson
8. Isaac Asimov
9. James A. Williams
10. Martin Greenberg
11. Sam Merwin, Jr.
12. Walter I. Bradbury
13. Bruce Elliott
14. L. Jerome Stanton
15. Jerome Bixby
16. Basil Davenport
17. Robert W. Lowndes
18. Olga Ley
19. Oswald Train
20. Charles Dye
21. Frank Belknap Long
22. Damon Knight
23. Thomas S. Gardner
24. Harry Harrison
25. Sam Bowne
26. Groff Conklin
27. Larry T. Shaw
28. Lester del Rey
29. Frederic Brown
30. Margaret Bertrand
31. Evelyn Harrison
32. L. Sprague de Camp
33. Theodore Sturgeon
34. George C. Smith
35. Hans Stefan Santessen
36. Fletcher Pratt
37. Willy Ley
38. Katherine MacLean Dye
39. Daniel Keyes
40. H. L. Gold
41. Walter Kubilius

"I, Audrey Beaumont, loved Carl Dixon, but he loved another!! I was determined she would not get him... We had a tug-of-war for a man's heart! Someone was bound to get hurt, but I didn't care... I loved Carl Blindly, madly, possessively!!"
"My Second-hand PROPOSAL"
HE'S MINE, LILA, HE'S MINE!
GET YOUR HANDS OFF HIM, AUDREY - HE BELONGS TO ME!

Harrison & Wood